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The Foreign Protestant Pulpit.

THE FOREIGN PROTESTANT PULPIT.

SERMONS

BY

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SEEING AND BELIEVING.

The Rev. EUG. BERSIER, *Pastor, Paris.*

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”—2 COR., v., 7.

THERE are two worlds—the visible and the invisible ; but for the Fall they would constitute one. Had we remained pure, the visible world would be to us the mirror of eternal realities. We should find God everywhere—we should see nature reflect His image more distinctly than the crystal waters of Geneva reproduce on a calm day the majestic sublimities of the Alps. To separate God from His works would be an impossibility ; we could more readily separate the flower from its perfume, or the sun from its rays.

See how Jesus contemplated nature : for Him the invisible world is everywhere. He finds it in the well which is streaming at His feet ; in the branches united with the vine ; in the tree which is covering Him with its shade ; in the corn-fields which are mellowing ; in the sky reddening at even-time ; and even in the minutest details of the life of the publicans or the sinners who are surrounding Him. Everything becomes in His eyes a transparent image of the human soul and of her divine destiny. Through the midst of all that arrests our looks, He perceives the invisible world—He sees it so clearly that faith is unnecessary ; and we should feel justly astonished if anybody spoke to us of the faith of

Jesus; Jesus sees heaven opened; He lives there — He breathes there — He carries it everywhere with Him on earth.

Thus it ought to be. Alas! you know how it is. Ask the masses what they see beyond the visible things; or rather ask those men whom visible things do not absorb entirely. Most of them know no realities but in this world; the rest they consider as chimeras and vain-dreamings. To know visible things — that is their wisdom; to act on visible things — that is their work; to enjoy visible things — that is their happiness. Beyond that, everything disappears before their eyes. Even religion, which ought to be, before all things, a revelation of the invisible world, they degrade by making only the hand-maid of this present life. Some make of her an instrument of political authority; others consider her as a civil and social institution; others would reduce the Church to play the part of a vast philanthropic association; others see in public worship and in prayer nothing but the satisfaction of certain wants in human nature. Among all these ideas you will find a more or less avowed negation of the invisible world, and while for him who is pure in heart visible things ought to be but an image of the invisible; for man as a sinner, on the contrary, things which are not seen appear only of value in so far as they are ministering to present interests—to the security of those things which are passing away.

But, without accusing other people, let us ask ourselves what place the invisible world is occupying in our life. How difficult is it for us to lay hold of it! To open our eyes to its pure light, is there not required a more painful operation—a more difficult preparation—than what a blind man must undergo to recover his sight? And how quickly do we forget it—how easily are we distracted from it! What an enormous power are present pre-occupations exercising

on our spirit! How they throw into the shade eternal realities!

Such is our state. Now, God, who is aware of it—God, who will save us—has designed for us a plan of education, which St. Paul sums up in this great word,—“We walk by faith, not by sight.” Now, beloved brethren, I pray you adopt these words as your motto—constantly revert to them in every period of your life.

“By faith, not by sight!” But before explaining these words, we must remark, they are in the most striking contrast with the ideas and tendencies which actuate the men of our own generation. There is to-day a philosophical school which enjoys the immense advantage of knowing clearly what it wants, which is represented by men whose talent and character are exercising an incontestable influence. This school has written on its banner the word *positivism*. It tells man, “What is the use of letting your thoughts stray into the invisible world; to pursue those vain clouds which are called religions?” Renounce all these chimeras, which have perplexed, without benefiting, the human soul for so many ages. Believe what you see. Lay hold of the visible world; mend human laws; seek to raise the intelligence of your fellow-men; progress is only possible in these things; happiness can be secured to you only in this way. This doctrine is re-echoed on every hand; some express it in grave language, and others with cynical flippancy. What is the invisible world to most of our moneyed men? What place does it occupy in the midst of their ardent and feverish speculations? They say, with a sneering satisfaction, they can do without it.

Yet, what an array of weapons have we for the defence of the invisible world against this scorn and indifference! We might do better, even in the name of that very civilisation which men oppose to us. Yea, we could easily show

that the greatest things, and those which have been the most salutary for humanity, are the work of those men who, in a higher or humbler sphere, walked by faith, and not by sight.

When St. Paul spoke the words of my text, the ancient world was precisely in the state to which men would lead back the modern world. It only believed in visible and palpable things; it considered as chimeras and trifles all that went beyond them. It did not believe in a Divine Providence, nor in the efficacy of prayer, nor in those hopes the accomplishment of which will only be witnessed by eternity. And yet this world, which only believed in itself, what had it arrived at? On what shore had it stranded? Did it believe in progress? did it believe in justice? did it believe in liberty? did it cherish any hope? Ah! who is not aware that there was never a more shameful degeneration, a more complete degradation, a more universal forgetfulness of the nobility and the dignity of man? Who has given it life again? Who has prevented it from sinking into nothingness? Who has reminded humanity of what constituted its greatness? Who else but those men who opposed to the present world the world to come, and who refused to admit that our soul's aspirations should finish here—below?

This is a striking and evident fact, and which alone would suffice to justify the Gospel against the accusations of carnal men. Now this fact has often repeated itself. For the eighteen centuries which comprise the history of our religion, how often has the world been ready to sink back into that condition in which Christianity found it, ready to renounce its best privileges—no more to believe anything but what may be felt and seen.

We should form a strange idea of Christianity if we believed that it teaches us to despise the earth and the present life. I know that many causes have favoured this error. The monastic life, opposed by Roman Catholicism to the active and

social life, and the deplorable exaggerations of certain Christians who have neglected the most important duties of life, pretending that eternity was taking up all their thoughts, have too often furnished infidelity with weapons. But Christianity itself is innocent of these errors and these excesses. Never, I repeat it, has it taught us to forget, or even to neglect, the duties and privileges of earth; on the contrary, it teaches us to regard both without being absorbed in either. Earth is not—it cannot be—the aim of the Christian, but it is the scene of his activity, even the place where his eternal future is prepared. It is often maintained that eternity diminishes the happiness of the present life; but I assert, on the contrary, that it gives it incomparable grandeur. What is man? what are all his desires? what are his hopes? his labours? his affections? when the passing hour is carrying away everything with it? Is it, then, worth our while to live for the present? Is there an altar worthy of our sacrifices this side the grave? It is useless to talk here of higher emotions, of nobler aspirations, of human nature. These higher emotions, these lofty aspirations, will soon die if there is no eternity for them, just as the plant dies if it is deprived of air and sunlight. And, indeed, do you not hear this eternal repetition, “vanity of vanities,” which is ringing in your ears, and producing in your soul an inextinguishable impression of discouragement? Do you not almost hourly perceive how your exertions come to nothing, how your best designs are mistaken, and how your noblest charity is despised? No; if this world is sufficient for me—if, instead of passing through it, I must remain here—if this earth is my only fatherland and my only heritage, life has no longer any signification for me; it remains an enigma as cruel as it is inexplicable, and one must write on its threshold that sorrowful but true word of the Apostle, “Without God, without hope.”

Open to me, on the contrary, eternity. Tell me that life is a

journey, a marching forward; tell me that my fatherland is awaiting me, then I am able to begin and undertake everything, and the bitter feeling of vanity disappears. I am able to act—to act, if necessary, without a result, sow on a barren ground, pursue among the greatest privations the meanest and the most insignificant work. I know that my sacrifices, my labours, and my tears are as so many seeds, which will germinate for that day when the sun of the invisible world shall arise. I can love—love in the presence of death. I know that death will extinguish those looks which answer to me; that he will take the life out of that heart with its regular pulsations and soft emotions; that he will make stiff that hand, the loyal grasp of which encouraged and strengthened me. But I have in my heart an immortal hope. It may be quenched for a moment, and be likely to expire; but a breath from heaven is sufficient to disperse the ashes which encrust the soul, causing it to stream forth again a bright and cheerful light. Yea, it is just because I do not entirely belong to the present life that I can act on this earth, it is just what gives to my life, so short and so wretched, such a solemn importance. Therefore do not try to deprive me of the invisible world in the name of the present interests of humanity. All that is in me revolts against such an attempt; and history, here agreeing with my innermost experience, proves to me that the present life can only be understood and explained in the light of eternity.

Such, beloved brethren, would be my answer to those who treat disdainfully this great word of St. Paul,—“We walk by faith, not by sight.” But let us forget these attacks. You are Christians; this word of the apostle is your motto; you recognise with me that it indicates admirably the divine plan of your destiny.

I have still to show that, accepting this motto theoretically we may openly deny it in reality. Some examples will be

SEEING AND BELIEVING.

sufficient to prove that, in the direction of our life, we often substitute walking by sight for walking by faith.

And, first of all, what shall we say of those who do not accept religion unless it be presented to them under a fascinating form, with the approbation of man, with all that speaks to the senses and the imagination? How often have we heard Roman Catholicism bring forward, as the greatest evidence of Christianity, the power, the antiquity, the external splendour of the visible church! But do not those who want such signs in proof of truth walk by sight? Jesus said to His disciples, who admired the beauty of the temple, "See ye not all these things?" What would He, then, say to those who cannot understand truth when not accompanied by a gorgeous ceremonial, and upheld by a powerful hierarchy? What would He say in the face of a church which, when her temporal power and her earthly possessions are menaced, is more stirred than when, in the last century, impiety attacked, not the walls of the temple, but the altar—not the exterior edifice, but the cross—not an earthly sovereign, but Jesus Christ Himself? "See ye not all these things?" And can we positively affirm that such a temptation has never crept over us? Have not we been troubled in our faith, because we saw the Church feeble, obscure, and despised? Did we never wish her the homage of the world, the support of distinguished men, the authority of numbers, or of public opinion? Do we cling as faithfully to truth when it is despised as when it enjoys the respect and the consideration of men? Well, asking for these external signs is wishing to walk by sight, and not by faith. Ye who want these signs, what would you have done in the days of Jesus Christ? To believe, you want the prestiges of outward appearance! Where was it at Nazareth, at Gethsemane, or on Golgotha? You want the antiquity of traditions, the authority of men. Where were they when almost the whole Jewish sanhedrim

called Jesus a blasphemer and a transgressor of the law? You want the support of numbers and of public opinion. Would you have found it in the midst of this people, who were unanimous to curse Jesus, and to cry "Crucify! crucify!" You want the approbation of distinguished men. What would you have done had you seen the Pharisees shaking their heads and laughing at the strange spectacle of a pretended king, of a worker of miracles, who, on the cross, does not even possess the strength to master his anguish? To believe, you must see. What would you have seen on the Mount of Olives and on Golgotha? What would this extraordinary solitude, this unparalleled humiliation, this frightful agony have taught you? It is not to sight—it is to faith—it is to the eyes of the soul that truth is revealed.

You will readily agree with me, since truth has appeared here below, has been crucified and crowned with thorns, man has understood that outward glory is no longer the sign by which it is to be recognised. But we may, in another way, wish to walk by sight, and not by faith.

There are Christians who are troubled in their soul, because to the Church in our days God no longer grants glorious, surprising, miraculous signs of His intervention. It would be so easy for Him, they think, to accomplish miracles. Why does he not unfold all his power to render truth victorious? Beloved brethren, we could give many answers to this questioning. We could show, first, that miracles alone have never converted the heart, of which we have abundant proof in the contrast between the Galilæans, who remained unbelievers in the presence of the most marvellous wonders, and the hearers of St. Paul, who, without a miracle, were converted by thousands. We could further answer, that if miracles were necessary to faith, every one must witness them. Supposing there were such a multiplication of wonders, miracles would lose their power, being no

longer regarded as supernatural. Throwing aside such reasoning, I see clearly that the more revelation advances, the less God shows Himself to sight, and the more He reveals Himself to faith.

In the beginning, I see Him conversing with men by the medium of angels; I see continual signs and wonders; a pillar of cloud or of fire marks His presence; the thunder roars on Sinai. In short, everything speaks to the sight; but, with the advent of Jesus Christ, everything changes! He teaches us that there is a sign which attests better the presence of God than all the external miracles—it is love. When John, the forerunner, the man of the old covenant, asks Christ, “Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” Christ, doubtless, answers him by enumerating the wonders which He has accomplished—“The lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up;” but He finishes with those sublime words, “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” That is the decisive proof of the presence of the Desire of the nations. O, John the Baptist, you expected a glorious Messiah, and you have not been able to recognise that His works of love announced Him better than miracles or the majesty of Sinai. If it be so, dear brethren, why seek after miracles? We must walk by faith, not by sight. God will not open the heavens; there will be no sign given to this unbelieving generation—no other sign than the sign of the cross; for he whom the cross leaves insensible, he who passes before it without emotion, he who does not read there the presence of God and behold His infinite mercy, would not be moved though a man should rise from the grave, and declare Jesus is the Christ. Ye who are already believing do not wish for these visible signs of God’s presence, for this would be as much as to say that a wonder attests better the presence of God than the most evident proof which He has ever given of His great love;

that would be as much as to say, that for you there is something more convincing, more decisive, than that astonishing sacrifice on Golgotha, than that abyss of love over the brink of which angels are stooping; because never, in the splendours of heaven or in the precincts of infinite glory, have they seen anything so grand and magnificent.

There is still another way of walking by sight, and not by faith, when we wish Christianity to justify itself entirely in the eyes of reason. Now God, who does not overcharge men with the evidence of miracles, does not desire to overcharge them with the evidence of logical proofs; all these proofs being directed to the sight, while God must be received by faith. Miracles speak to the senses, arguments speak to the intellect; but God will lay hold of our moral being, that is to say, of the noblest qualities which are in us. He wishes that we shall freely give up ourselves to Him by faith. I can, therefore, remain at ease when I must see that all the theological systems (even the best) are more or less incomplete—more or less imperfect. What reaches beyond every system, is the divine, the infinite, the mysterious side of the truth, which no human formula can ever comprehend; but how joyfully does faith lay hold of it, feeling that it just wants those mighty and hidden things! What shall we, then, think of those who would reduce religion to the level of human intelligence, and deprive it of all which is above human comprehension. You might as well wish for an Aurora without mysteries, or a heaven without infinite depths. But a religion thus restricted will remain what it is—a work of men. It will never enrapture the soul, it will never inspire it with anything that is above the reach of common morality; it will produce neither believers nor apostles, for they, dear brethren, walk by faith, and not by sight.

We are still desiring sight instead of faith when we ask God to mark His providence by continual deliverances, by

immediate answers to our prayers. Christians are very often troubled because their prayers remain unanswered. We may rest assured that He has good reasons for delaying or denying our requests, and one of these reasons is, doubtless, that we must walk by faith and not by sight. Imagine a life where prayer would always be followed by an immediate deliverance. Beloved brethren, who would not wish to be a Christian at that price? Everybody would like to be one. Just as the Jews who thronged Jesus' way while he distributed bread to them. How many would be disciples from the right motive? Now it is just that mercenary instinct which God wants to destroy in us. He has an intense desire that we should love Him with a disinterested love. Therefore, while He assures us that all our prayers are heard, He seldom shows us beforehand how He will answer them. Remember the admirable example of the woman of Canaan. What would she have obtained if she had only walked by sight? Her sight revealed to her in Jesus Christ a strange coldness, an icy silence, let us be plain, a despising indifference, and yet she triumphs over appearances; she goes through the countenance of Jesus, and, what is still more striking, through His word to His very heart.

The history of the Church shows us that the most glorious victories of faith have been won against every appearance. Jesus Christ Himself by faith saw before His death the fruit of the bitter travail of His soul. His dying eyes were fixed on a crowd who cursed Him, and it was not sight which could reveal to Him a conquered world, a redeemed Church, and Heaven the home of myriads of the saved. How often, when we see the prayer of some saint manifestly answered long after his death, we say, "Oh, that he had lived to see this day, the day he so desired." We must remember, though He saw not, He believed. In this very fact is something great and sublime. Pray, then, Christian mother,

pray still for the conversion of your son, pray, whoever you may be, for the soul which God, at this moment, presents to thy love; pray incessantly, pray without doubting, and should your eyes only meet subjects of discouragement, remember that we walk by faith and not by sight.

These remarks on prayer find also their application on every Christian activity. It is a singular but evident fact, that the greatest progress in the kingdom of God has been attained by men who believed though they did not see. I remind you once more of our Lord Jesus Christ. I ask you once more, what did He see in His ministry? What would He have done if He had walked by sight? And we, dear brethren, what shall we do if we want to see instead of believing, if we resemble those children who, after having cast a seed corn into the ground, return every instant to see whether it has sprung up. What would become of works undertaken in that spirit, the works pursued above all things with a view to success? God only blesses those who have confidence enough in his faithfulness to commit to him the care of results, and to say with Luther, "It is Thy work, not mine." It is stated that the immortal astronomer, whose penetrating genius discovered the laws of the motions of the planets, Kepler of Wurttemberg—whose great labours were not understood by his contemporaries, so that he was reduced to the greatest distress—when lying on his death-bed, and being asked by a friend whether he suffered not cruelly to be obliged to die without seeing his discoveries appreciated, answered, "My friend, God has waited five thousand years till one of His creatures discovered the admirable laws which he has given to the stars; why should I, then, not wait till justice is done to me?" Lay hold of this word ye who work the works of God. And, if necessary, without seeing a result, speak without being heard, love without being understood, cast

your bread on the waters, and to conquer truly the world, walk by faith, and not by sight.

There is a last lesson which I should like to draw from this word. They are wrong who want to describe beforehand, as it has been so often tried, the way which the Christian is to follow. The Christian life is like an immense region which thousands of pilgrims have already travelled through ; each had followed the road which God had traced out for him ; some have found it soft and easy, they have walked under a clear sky, and a joyful hymn has mostly escaped their lips ; others have passed through a darkness whose gloom is appalling to think of ; others could only sigh during their monotonous walk in the midst of a barren and pitiless wilderness. Yet all these ways led to the fatherland, and none has a right to say that the road he followed is that which all others must enter upon ; for if this road were known, if it could be described, we should walk by sight, and no longer by faith. Let us then accept any unforeseen events ; let us expect that God will destroy our plans and disappoint our expectations, whether He send us joy or sorrow, let us walk by faith, allowing Him to lead us. Knowing this, if happiness would sanctify us, God would not refuse it, but is it calculated to sanctify us ? Does it prepare us for the invisible world ? Doubtless, when prosperity descends like a divine ray on a peaceable home, on a united family, on beloved children, the soul of the Christian, the grateful soul, easily ascends from the earth which the smiles of God illumine, to God Himself. But how often does it remain below ! How often is it satisfied to seek God on that earth where He smiles on it ? How often is it content with walking no longer by faith but by sight. Then the wind of trials rises, it sweeps, it scatters this joyful home and these beloved beings : Our soul seeks them on earth. Alas ! it finds them not here, therefore it must soar heavenward. Thus faith replaces

sight, the invisible world enriching itself with all that earth loses ; the more the latter is depopulated, the more attractive does the former become.

And that explains to us why often trials burst with an incredible energy upon those who seem to us to be the most sanctified. Formerly, perhaps, God led them by sight ; He manifested to them His presence by evident proofs of His fatherly goodness. Thus their piety grew strong, protected as it was against too rude trials ; but this time is over. All these visible signs of Divine intervention have disappeared ; all that satisfied the sight is refused to them. The stronger their Christian life becomes, the more it appears severe and joyless.

When travellers undertake to climb the Alps, they meet first at their feet valleys sheltered by the mountain against the keen north wind ; the air there is pure and full of fragrance, the waters are of an unequalled transparency, and the trees are covered with the sweetest fruits ; there are peaceful and charming retreats where they fancy they could lead a sequestered and tranquil life. When they ascend the scenery changes, it becomes at the same time more grand and more uniform ; here are dark pine and fir forests, where you hear the moaning of the winds and often the distant noise of avalanches ; here are the steep dells and already the deep abysses ; the sky has lost its variegated colours, the air is keener, but the eye reaches farther. The higher they ascend the more austere does nature become ; soon they find neither fragrance, nor flowers, nor verdure ; there is nothing but the gloomy pall of snow and ice ; and on the highest summits everything would announce death were there not in this extraordinary silence, in this immense and illimitable sky, something which speaks of infinity and eternity.

I have often thought this is a suitable figure of human life. It is a journeying from south to north, from spring to winter,

from morning to night. Youth abounds in dazzling dreams and happy enjoyments. Riper years are marked by fewer pleasures and harder conflicts, and age is marked full often by nought but ice-like disappointments. Ever before its eyes are broken promises, unfulfilled expectations, rejected love. If we are without God, if faith does not open to our tired soul the boundless vision of heaven, then our last years will be barrenness, desolation, and despair.

I will not conclude, dear brethren, without relieving the contrast contained in my text. It presents to us two classes of men—some who walk by sight, others who walk by faith. According to the judgment of worldlings, the former alone are reasonable—the former alone have chosen the good part. The good part! Is it true? Ah, is it then such a good world which sight reveals to us? To deem it such, we must not wish to see. But ask those who are sharp-sighted what they discover each day in this world, which may sometimes have beguiled them. Ask them what they would often give not to be obliged to see. Alas! they must see; and the more their sight is exercised, the sadder are the discoveries which they make every day. They see the motives which cause men to act; they see the means which very often lead to success. They only wished to live by sight, and in everything they meet they see too much to be happy; the more their soul rises, the more their heart wants to love, the more they suffer; and even where no cruel deception is going on, they, at last, see death approaching—death, and nothing more; for sight can discover nothing beyond it—death, with its cold mystery—death, with its eternal silence. Is, then, this the good part, and is it worth our while to pursue it, losing thus our soul?

But, you will object, the Christian also sees these things. Yes, doubtless, he sees them; perhaps better than the man of the world, for his purified eye is better able to discern

the evil. He sees all these things ; but, beyond the world of sight, he has the world of faith. There he finds holiness unmarred—justice without imperfection—truth unalloyed with error. There he beholds love—that which earth revealed so often allied with misery, he sees, in all its glory and beauty, pure, infinite, undefiled in the heart of God and the saints. He quenches his thirst at that deep and inexhaustible fountain ; the more he advances, the more these realities become sensible and evident ; he feels that they alone are worthy to be loved and pursued.

Will you answer me that he is mistaken, that his erring imagination is pursuing a phantom ? He mistaken ! I appeal to the experience of all the dead who have walked by faith. I appeal to their dying looks, lit up already by the beams of the eternal morning ; I appeal to the words of firm assurance and of triumph which they have pronounced at the moment of their departure. Dear brethren, have you ever heard that a man on his death-bed regretted he had walked by faith ? Have you ever heard the dying saint declare his hope had proven vain ? Ask all those who have believed in God, from the just men of the old covenant to St. Paul—from St. Paul to those who have left us yesterday, and whose last words you have heard. I ask, once more, which of them has regretted to have pursued the invisible realities, to have lived for eternity ? We have seen a thousand times men who had only walked by sight bitterly regretting at their last hour that they had only pursued vain phantoms. We have seen men whom the world has loaded with honour pronounce all sublunary things but “vanity.” We have seen a great minister, loaded with every token of honour, when informed on his death-bed that Louis XIV. was about to pay him a visit, answering with these frightful words, — “Tell this man to let me alone, for if I had done for God what I have done for him, I might now dare to look heavenward.” Yea,

at that supreme hour, where illusions are impossible, it has occurred a thousand times, that all that the world called realities was found to be nothing but phantoms; it has occurred that human glory, pleasure, fortune, have disappeared like a morning-cloud, behind which eternity has unfolded itself in its frightful solemnity. But it has never been seen, and it will never be seen, that a Christian declared on his death-bed that his God has deceived him.

Cheer up, then, beloved brethren! The future for you is certitude, rest, joy, and love. The present passes with its vanities, its sorrows, and its fears. Cheer up! and let us walk towards the future by faith, not by sight. Amen.





ST. PAUL AT ATHENS.

THE REV. H. MONOD, *Pastor, Marseilles.*

I.

“Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know, therefore, what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needeth anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though

He be not far from every one of us : for in Him we live, and move, and have our being : as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent : because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained ; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He raised Him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked : and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed : among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."—ACTS xvii., 16-34.

THE narration which we have just read is certainly one of the most remarkable episodes in the history of the rising church. We see there this church penetrating into the heart of pagan civilization, and entering into conflict, for the first time, with polytheism, under its brightest and most celebrated form. In this conflict, apparently very unequal, all is new, grand, extraordinary, and rich in contrasts. Paganism is represented by the town of Athens: Athens, the great, the wealthy, the polite, the cultured, the illustrious—Athens, the metropolis of learning, of letters and arts—Athens, with her philosophers, her orators, her poets, her pictures, her statues, her temples, and her marble and golden palaces. Christianity is represented there by the Apostle Paul: Paul, who had nothing in his outward appearance to excite the attention of men; Paul, the tent maker; Paul, whom both the Gospel and tradition represent to us as a man of small frame, afflicted with bodily infirmities, having probably some defect in his speech, and doubtless a foreign accent. Such are the two powers who are about to measure their strength. What will be the issue of this conflict, so new

and so strange, which begins in the town of Athens, to spread soon over Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, Alexandria, and all the bright centres of pagan civilization? The mere fact that such a man engages in a contest with such a town is already a presage of victory, for his courage would be the temerity of a madman, if it did not emanate from a divine and therefore Almighty principle. And though this tent maker "with the contemptible speech," "this babbler" of religious news, does not succeed in converting "to the unknown God" the frivolous crowd of his hearers, yet he will at least be heard, which, under such circumstances, was already a victory; and his word will at least bring to Jesus Christ some souls precious before the Lord, a pledge and first fruit of the rich harvest which the Gospel was to gather afterwards in the pagan world.

"Now, while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

It seems that the Apostle intended first, either not to preach at Athens, or at least to wait till he was assisted by the arrival of Silas and Timothy; but he was not able to contain his zeal and his holy indignation in the face of the frightful idolatry which he had before his eyes. Athens was a striking example of the vanity of human efforts within the province of religious truth, in the absence of a Divine revelation. This town, which surpassed every other, by the splendour of her riches, her talents, and knowledge, did not less surpass them by the foolishness of her superstitions; the pagans themselves informing us that it was "filled with the temples" of the false gods.* The Athenians had been pleased to gather in their town all the divinities worshipped by all the nations of the earth, fondly thinking thus to secure their favour; and for fear of forgetting some god whose name

* "Fanorum referta."—Cicero.

might not have reached them, they had raised altars consecrated by an inscription to an unknown divinity. It is this state of things which stirs up the Apostle's indignation and fires him with zeal. He can no longer contain himself. He must speak, whatever may be the consequences, and cause the name of the living God to resound in the midst of those temples full of idols; he disputes first with the Jews, and then with the Gentiles themselves.

This holy indignation, produced by the view of forgetfulness of God, was always a characteristic sign of true faith, and the servants of the Lords show it in every age. Thus, already under the patriarchal covenant, the just Lot, dwelling in an idolatrous and corrupted town, "vexed his righteous soul from day to day," the Holy Scripture tells us, "with their unlawful deeds." Thus, later, Elijah gives way to his solitary grief in the cave of Horeb, and answers to the Lord, who wants to know the cause of his affliction, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant!" Thus David waters his couch the whole night, and writes in his admirable hundred and nineteenth psalm, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." Thus Jesus, seized by a Divine wrath, drives out of the temple of God all those who profane it, and thus justifies that word which the prophets had put into His mouth, "the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."

And we, beloved brethren, do we know by experience that vehement affliction which is produced in believing souls by the sight of superstition or infidelity? When we are in a society where God and the Gospel are lightly spoken of, does what we hear become for us the subject of a true grief? Is our spirit "stirred in us" with a holy indignation, like St. Paul's, at the sight of the superstitions which abound amongst ourselves, so rich in a worldly respect, and so poor in God's

eyes? And when we shift ourselves in our thoughts beyond the seas, when we contemplate in the spirit that mass of heathen darkness which no ray of Divine light has yet pierced—those millions of poor idolaters who perish far from Christ—is that for us a subject of deep and bitter grief? Are we driven, like the apostle, to bear witness to that truth which we know; to break, by every possible means, the power of superstition; to labour at the conversion of souls; to further the coming of the kingdom of God? Alas! have we not every reason to humble ourselves in this matter? How lukewarm and indifferent are we for the glory of our God! The pagans themselves must condemn us in this respect, for they had more zeal for their idols of wood and stone than we for the living and true God. The children of a degenerated church must confound us in this respect, for very often they have more zeal for their saints and their Madonnas than we for God, the Infinite Spirit, whose word is eternal truth. In this respect, as in many others, a complete change must take place within us; we must know by experience the jealousy of Elijah, the sorrow of David, the indignation of St. Paul; we must surpass in zeal our brethren of the Church of Rome, as much as we surpass them in knowledge and illumination.

“Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.”

The Epicureans and the Stoics, who were the two principal philosophical sects of Greece, are the representatives of the two extremes between which human reason has constantly oscillated in the province of religious truth. All the efforts

of philosophy have broken upon the enigma of human nature, and of the place which it occupies in the moral world. There is in man a double tendency, which solicits him in two opposite directions—a tendency towards heaven, which draws him near God, and a tendency towards earth, which draws him near the brute ; something which induces us to seek after all that is noble and generous is associated in us with low and corrupt inclinations. The philosophers, not knowing how to combine these two opposite tendencies, not being able to explain this monstrous assemblage of greatness and baseness, resolved on dividing human nature, and on clinging to one of its phases to the exclusion of the other. Some have taken the greatness of man, others his baseness, as the foundation of their systems, from which resulted either proud or degrading philosophies, which, struggling with each other, have only in common the character of being false. The Epicureans, clinging to the baseness of our nature, arrived at materialism and personal interest, and imagined the sovereign good to consist in the satisfaction of the wants of the body. The Stoics, clinging to the tendency which draws us near heaven, have exalted human nature in such a degree that they have deified it, and arrived at a morality altogether proud and impracticable. This enigma of our nature, which has led philosophers astray, is explained to us by the Bible in its first pages. It is true that it explains it to us by a mystery ; but, according to a deep saying of Pascal, “man is still more incomprehensible without this mystery than this mystery is incomprehensible to man.” This mystery is original sin. Man was created noble and pure ; but, through the sin of our first parents, he has become vile and corrupt. Yet he is not so miserable as not to have an idea of his past happiness, and to long after it. His greatness consists in his knowing his misery. He walks in darkness, but he sorrowfully remembers the light ; he is full of misery, but it is the misery

“of a dethroned king.” Such is the deep thought upon which rests the moral philosophy of the Bible. The aim of God’s message to men is to restore us to that state of purity and happiness from which we fell by sin. This Divine Work encounters in the world two great adversaries who are always the same, the same who rose at Athens against the preaching of St. Paul—epicurism on one side, stoicism on the other ; in other words, sensuality and pride.

“Some said, What will this babbler say ? ” The disdain which these words breathe marks too often the reception which the Gospel of Truth finds in this world. There are men who oppose to the preaching of this Gospel a violent and professed enmity ; and this kind of opposition is, perhaps, not the most painful to bear. There are others who are content to shrug their shoulders on hearing evangelical doctrines, and to treat those who profess them as fanatical babblers or crack-brains. This disdainful and cold contempt, laughing at those things which are the most serious to us, is that, perhaps, which requires the greatest renunciation on our side. Prepare yourselves, by the grace of the Lord, ye who want to profess the Gospel, to suffer the eternal hatred of the world against this Gospel, under whatever form it may present itself ; be ready, not only to give your life, if necessary, for the name of Christ, but to be “fools for Christ’s sake,” as St. Paul was. Remember that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ;” that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” and that if “the preaching of the cross is unto them who are saved the power of God and the wisdom of God, it is foolishness to them that perish.”

“Other some said, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection,” they doubtless considering the resurrection as a new goddess. This last circumstance shows us that St. Paul,

in preaching the Gospel at Athens, exposed himself to a great danger ; for preaching strange gods was a crime which the Athenian laws punished with death. The apostle had, besides, to do with hearers who were not content with a preaching shut up within a narrow compass. Greedy of all that could delight their insatiable curiosity, they bring him to the Areopagus, to oblige him to make his opinions publicly known. The Areopagus was an open place, situated on an eminence, where the high court of Athens, charged to take cognizance of crimes against religion, was held. Yet as nothing, in what follows, reminds us of a judicial assembly, it does not seem that the apostle had here to do with judges : his audience was a mixed crowd, furnished by all classes of the population, and the aim of those who brought him to the Areopagus was no other than curiosity, as we learn from an observation of St. Luke on the character of the Athenians.

“ And they took him and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears ; we would know, therefore, what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.) ”

This picture, altogether so lively and so concise, of the character of the Athenians is confirmed, in the most striking manner, by the testimony of profane historians. Demosthenes, among others, often reproaches them in his speeches with that eagerness for news which diverted their attention from their most urgent interests. “ Is then this all your ambition,” thus he asks them somewhere, “ to walk in the squares, asking each other what is the best news?” This frivolous curiosity which characterised the people of Athens is found but too frequently even in our days. Are there not now men whose lives are almost entirely spent in gathering and spreading news?

Are there not some who every day spend many hours—precious hours which will never return—in reading the newspapers? And what is more empty, more useless to the world, more unworthy of an immortal creature, than such an existence? Perhaps, dear brethren, this reproach cannot be applied to you, and perhaps you congratulate yourselves in your hearts that your life is actively and usefully spent; but take care, if that activity has but terrestrial advantages for its object, you are, after all, no better than the Athenians, and your life is, as well as theirs, an existence unworthy of immortal beings. Raise your hearts and your thoughts above a perishing world; “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;” enquire not only for the means to increase your property, but, chiefly, what you have to do to save your souls. And if, like the Athenians of old, you are eager for news, do not trouble yourselves, above all things, about frivolous, trifling, ephemeral matters—not even about those things of the political world, which, whatever may be their importance in the age we are living in, after all only refer to perishable interests—but rather be concerned about that news, so great, so strange, so wonderful, which Jesus brought into the world, and which the angels announced for the first time to the shepherds of Bethlehem, namely, that a poor sinner like you and me, lost and condemned by his sins, may be rescued from hell, have his heart changed, and see heaven’s portals opening before him, and all that by the death of the Son of God!

Here, then, is Paul in the Areopagus, and obliged to confess his faith before the assembled Athenians. There never was a more sublime scene, either with respect to the point at issue, or the accessories surrounding it, as well by the great interests which are discussed, as by the magnificent theatre where it develops itself. It is sublime on account of the point at issue, for, as we have already observed, it is nothing

else but a struggle between Christianity and idolatry, between the old and the new world, between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of this world, between Christ and Satan. I might almost say between heaven and hell, It is sublime, too, on account of the theatre where it developes itself. Try to picture to yourselves the imposing spectacle which the apostle had before his eyes, and to which he offered himself. He is placed on the top of the rock which encircles the hill of Areopagus, and which is still existing, his noble face lit up by his love for the souls of men, animated by the fire of inspiration, is rendered more prominent on the deep blue sky. Around him are thronging the sceptical disciples of the academy, the lascivious disciples of Epicurus, the proud disciples of Zeno, and the capricious crowds of that Athenian population, altogether so frivolous and so fanatically taken with their false gods. If the apostle casts a look on the town which extends at his feet, he meets everywhere with the sumptuous monuments of pagan superstition; and all these marble temples, wonders of an art which never had its equal, seem in their pride to defy faith in a crucified Lord. Further on the eye perceives the port of the Piræus, the graceful contours of the coast, a magnificent amphitheatre of islands and mountains, and at last the Peloponnesus, while far and wide the blue waves reflect the beautiful sky of Greece. Thus all things, in the monuments of art as well as in the aspect of nature, seem to unite to raise the soul towards this great Being whom Paul was about to preach; towards this God "that made the world and all things therein;" "that is not worshipped with men's hands as though He needeth anything;" "who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto," and yet "is not far from every one of us;" "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."

The discourse which Paul delivered on that occasion, and which it remains for us to examine, is one of the most re-

markable pages of the whole Bible. Everything is worthy of attention in this speech, the courage of which it gives such proof, the moderation which it breathes, the elevated views of the orator, and the admirable art which is revealed there. It wanted assuredly a rare intrepidity on the side of a single man, without any other help than his zeal and his faith, to brave thus the sarcasm of philosophers and the fanaticism of a whole people. Besides, Paul ran the risk, as we have already seen, of a capital accusation. This is a fine example of civil courage, much more rare and difficult than military bravery. This courage is attended by a moderation and a loftiness of view not less admirable on the side of a Jew by birth. There are no bitter reproaches against idolatry, there is nothing which resembles those violent declamations of which the Jews were so prodigal when speaking of pagan superstitions. Paul shows indeed here that "he was made all things to all men," as he says himself; alternately "a Jew unto the Jews, and a Greek unto the Greeks, that he might by all means save some." Elevating himself greatly above the narrow ideas of his countrymen, he places himself as it were in the position of his hearers, and grants them all that was possible to grant without violating truth and faithfulness. He shows that polytheism, as well as the true religion, is founded on the idea of a superior power, and that the error of the Gentiles consists in looking only to the powers of nature instead of rising to the Creator. It is impossible not to be struck by the deep and clear simplicity as well as by the perfect justness of his views on this subject. Lastly, there is in this whole speech an art which we cannot sufficiently admire. This speech alone, or rather this exordium, for the apostle was not able to finish it, would suffice to class St. Paul among the great orators of the world, and to show that he possessed in an eminent degree what is called eloquence. We also find a proof that with profound studies he

combined a perfect tact and a knowledge of the human heart. When he spoke to the Jews he took his arguments from the Old Testament, with which he was as familiar as the most learned doctors of the law ; when he had to do with the rude and uncultivated populations of Lycaonia, he first fixed their attention by means of a miracle, healing before their eyes an impotent man ; but here, when in the presence of those polite and learned Athenians, who did not “require a sign, but asked after wisdom,” it was necessary to speak another language. Therefore does this speech of St. Paul not resemble any of those which he had delivered up to this day, or which he will deliver hereafter. It is an unprecedented piece of inspired literature.

Consider with what delicate precaution he sets to work not uselessly to hurt the susceptibility of his hearers, and how he finds the means to secure their favour just at the moment when he begins to reproach them roundly with their idolatry. “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” The term in the original is equally applicable to superstition and to true devotion ; the apostle designedly chose this ambiguous expression to insinuate, in the mildest possible form, the blame which lies at the bottom of his words. See then how, at the beginning of his speech, he removed the dangerous accusation of preaching a new deity. “It is not,” he seems to tell them, “a new god whom I announce to you, it is a God to whom you have yourselves erected altars. For in passing and in looking at the objects of your devotion, I have myself found an altar with this inscription : *To the unknown god*. Him, therefore, whom ye ignorantly worship, I proclaim to you.” What man, among all his hearers, could have been offended at such a preamble ? And yet this preamble will lead the orator, as we shall see hereafter, directly to combat, with an admirable

freedom and faithfulness alternately, all the errors of the philosophers and the superstitions of the crowd.

Among the various explanations which have been given of this altar consecrated to the unknown god, the most natural is that of which we have already spoken, namely, that the Athenians, notwithstanding that multitude of deities which they had accumulated in their town, were afraid of having forgotten one, and perhaps that one the most important, perhaps the only true. In the midst of that profusion of idols their religious wants were not yet satisfied; they felt but too well that those powerless, passionate, proud, sanguinary, impudent deities were not what man's heart requires; something told them that above all these gods of human fabrication, and whom they knew too well, since they were made after their likeness, there must exist another God—a living and true, mighty and wise, holy and good God—whose properties answer to this double want of justice and pardon which is at the bottom of each human heart. That vague longing for an unknown God is found more or less among all the peoples of the earth; it is that want, doubtless obscure but deep and universal, which the apostle so happily lays hold on, and which procures him an access to the minds of his hearers.

Men of the world—ye who live but for the interest of this world!—do ye not resemble in this respect the Athenians? Are not your hearts, like Athens of old, in some way temples of idols? These idols are no statues of wood and stone; but, though not material, the objects of your passions are not less the deities to which you consecrate your life. Your deities are pleasure, fortune, labour, ambition, and the affections of the heart. These are the false gods to which you pay homage—to which daily you burn the incense of your activity, your zeal, and your first love. But this lying worship does not satisfy you. As formerly the Athenians,

you feel that in the midst of all your idols you are still wanting something; and, in a hidden corner of your heart, you erect an altar with this inscription,—“To the unknown god!” You feel that all these idolized passions cannot satisfy the wants of your spirits, and that there remains in your breast a void, which can only be filled by a God altogether just and good—a God whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity, and whose heart, however, is too full of love to allow the repenting sinner to perish. Well, that God whom ye ignorantly worship, “Him declare I unto you.”

Every human heart feels a double want, which cannot be satisfied without the Gospel: it is a want of justice and a want of pardon. You feel that you are sinners, and that, to assure your heart, your sins must be forgiven; but you feel at the same time that, to satisfy your conscience, these sins must be punished, or expiated in some way or other. God would but partly answer your wants; He would but partly be God if He were either only just or only merciful—if He punished without pardoning, or if He pardoned without punishing. The reconciliation of these two requisites, apparently irreconcilable, is the rock against which have split all the religions of human invention. Some have seen in God but justice, and that justice has become rigour and cruelty. Others have seen in God but goodness, and that goodness has become weakness, connivance at sin. To the Gospel alone it was reserved to solve that eternal problem, which from age to age torments the thoughts and the heart of man. That unknown God, for whom all mankind is longing, and whom they are worshipping by anticipation, He is the God of the Gospel—the crucified God. Go to the crucified God, and all your wants will be satisfied! Go and rest from all your toils in the shade of the cross of Jesus Christ, and you will no more lack anything! Looking at this cross, you will learn how “justice and peace have kissed

each other," and how the punishment of sin has purchased the sinner's salvation. You will learn there to love that God who pardons with such an astonishing love, and to detest those sins which He punishes with such an inflexible justice. The living and true God, the God who is feared and loved, the God of Moses and of St. John, the God whose "judgments are unsearchable," and whose "goodness reacheth unto the heavens," the God of the Gospel, in short, will no longer be for you an unknown God; and you will be able to say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed!"

And we, beloved brethren — we who have felt to some extent in our own hearts the power of the Gospel—have we, too, not a lesson to learn from the inscription graven on the altar at Athens? Is not, in many respects, the God of the Gospel still an unknown God for us? We know Him as that merciful being who has pardoned our sins; but do we know Him as that friend who occupies the first place in our affections, whom we love with all the might of our soul, and in whose communion we live? Can we say with St. John, "We have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears, handled with our hands, the Word of Life?" Can we say with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me! our life is hid with Christ in God!" Oh, how many regions are still unknown to us in the province of Christian life! And how well do we deserve the reproach which the apostle addressed to the Hebrews, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

O, hidden God and Saviour, who yet can easily be found! God, formerly unknown to the philosophers of Athens, unknown to-day to the men of this world, and whom even we know but so imperfectly, come, and by Thy Spirit of Light

make Thyself better known to us from day to day ! .En-
lighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may know
what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the
glory of the inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceed-
ing greatness of Thy power to us-ward who believe ! Make
us to grow in that knowledge, the only necessary to which is
love and life ; and prepare us thus for those happy mansions
where we shall contemplate Thee without a veil, “where we
shall know even as also we are known ! ” Amen.





ST. PAUL AT ATHENS.

THE REV. H. MONOD, *Pastor, Marseilles.*

II.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.”—
ACTS xvii., 24, 34.



WHAT grandeur, what loftiness, what sublime simplicity in this introduction! To comprehend the impression which these words must have produced on the hearers of the apostle, it is necessary that we should shift to the old town of Athens, and figure to ourselves what were the religious conceptions of this audience. Hearing it always preached from our first infancy, we are unhappily indifferent to the great truth of one God and Creator of the world; and this sublime idea, which excites the admiration of angels, produces but little impression either on our minds or our hearts. But it was quite otherwise with the Athenians, who were accustomed materially to shut up the idea of the Deity in the inside of a temple, who multiplied their gods according to the caprices of their imagination or the passions of their heart, and who pictured these gods to themselves as feeding on the incense of offerings and the fat of sacrifices. Here, then, for the first time, they are told of one God,

spiritual and almighty, whose will is without a rival, whose infinite essence fills heaven and earth, and whose word has created the world. Oh, doubtless, these great objects must engage their attention with an irresistible power; and something must whisper to them that this unknown God, preached by an unknown orator—this God, whose character reached the highest conceptions of their intelligence—might well be the only true God. Moreover, this introduction of St. Paul's discourse was directed as well to the errors of the philosophers as to the superstitions of the multitude. And indeed, none of the sects of pagan philosophy admitted a creation in the true signification of the word—a creation from nothingness; and all, without exception, believed in the perpetuity of matter. The Epicureans maintained that the world had been formed by the fortuitous union of atoms in space; according to the Stoics, God had done nothing but given shape and order to matter pre-existing from all eternity; and, lastly, according to the opinion of the disciples of Aristotle, the world had always existed such as we see it to-day. The bold idea of a world created from nothingness; of a God who has made everything from nothing; “who calls the things which are not as if they were;” who “has spoken, and the thing has its being, who has commanded, and the universe has appeared;” who “has made the heavens by His word, and all their hosts by the breath of His mouth”—this sublime idea is essentially biblical, and found nowhere without revelation; unassisted human reason could never rise so high, and this fact alone would suffice to demonstrate the Divine origin of the Scriptures.

This idea of a creation from nothing, which is alone worthy of the Almighty, occupies an important place in the order of God's relations with men, and particularly in the economy of redemption. The Almighty God, who has from nothingness derived the first creation, could alone accomplish

a new creation of degenerated human nature, which is yet more astonishing ; for, in the beginning of the ages, the creating God is not confronted by anything which remains indifferent to His work, or which can bring to that work either help or obstacle. But, in the time of the evangelical regeneration, the saving God is confronted by a world, fallen from its first state—a perverted creation—which opposes to His work an obstinate and permanent resistance. Let this saving God be also the creating and almighty God, and He will be able to overcome this obstacle simply by His word, and cause to spring up, not merely from the bosom of nothing, but from the bosom of corruption itself, those “new heavens and that new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” and that “new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Let us, then, dear brethren, confidently have recourse to that God who is our Almighty Saviour, in the full assurance that He will know how to triumph over the hardness of our hearts, to convert and sanctify us.

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men’s hands.” Another of those simple and great truths, which unhappily have nearly lost for us, by the effect of long habit, their power and their beauty, but which, under such circumstances, confessed with so noble a courage, in the face of that multitude of temples of which the Athenians were so proud, must have confounded the hearers of the apostle with astonishment and admiration. “Do not I fill heaven and earth ? saith the Lord. The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool ; where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest ? ” How the most magnificent temples are little and paltry compared with these great conceptions ! In vain human art, unfolding its wonders, erects columns, chisels bas-reliefs, raises vaults and porticoes, as if to shut up within

these material symbols the idea of the Deity. This sublime idea breaks those narrow prisons of stone to spread into the immensity of space ; and however far the thought may stray, being lost in the boundless regions of the infinite, it finds everywhere the God of the Bible — the God whom Paul preached on Areopagus. Let us guard against the tendency, beloved brethren, which we have all by nature, to limit the idea of God, to circumscribe it to a certain fixed place ; let us remember that this God surrounds us at all times, in every place, that He “besets us behind and before ;” and that if the wants of an indigent and restricted nature compel us here below to unite in temples of wood and stone, His true temple is the universe. What do I say ? His true temple is a heart animated by a sincere faith and by a fervent desire to possess it. “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” That we might not lose sight of this great principle, our reformers, of blessed memory, wished to banish from our worship material pomp and external ornaments. Must we admit that they were carried away a little too far in that necessary reaction against the abuses of a degenerated Church ? Must we regret that in our reformed temples, as in those of our Lutheran brethren, there has not been preserved at least the sign of redemption ? For myself, though I attach very little value to those external things, I should not be afraid if I met with it in this Church. I should like to point, in my sermons, at that cursed and blessed wood, the symbol of ignominy and throne of glory, on which the Saviour has shed His blood for our sins, and the absence of which fosters among our brethren of the Romish Church that calumnious and too much spread opinion that the Protestants are afraid of the cross. Oh, know it well, if I have any hearers who have fostered such an idea, that not only we do not reject the cross, but that it is the cross which makes all our hope for time and eternity ;

that we wish to live under the cross; that we wish to die embracing the cross! Doubtless, not a material cross, a piece of ivory or ebony, the simple touching of which has never saved, and will never save, a single sinner, but that spiritual cross which we receive into our heart, which we embrace by faith, and which is nothing else but the expiatory death of Jesus Christ, giving His life for our sins. This is the cross which we want, which is of value in our eyes, though we do not wish entirely to exclude from our temples the visible sign of redemption. Should you, perhaps, want us to go further — should you miss in our temples those pictures, those statues, those candles, that incense, all that material pomp which in the churches of Rome so powerfully seizes the imagination and the senses—should you find our worship and our temples too simple, too meagre, too poor, perhaps — if that be your secret thought, listen to a similitude :

A people who worshipped the sun wanted to erect a temple to the honour of their god. To that end they sent from far and with great expenses for a clever and renowned architect. This man, after having long reflected on the kind of edifice which should answer best to the required end, considered that the temple most worthy the sun would be a temple of glass; and this was indeed the only material of which he constructed it. In this magnificently simple temple, the transparent walls of which gave a free access to his illuminating rays, there was not one point which was not filled by the presence of the deity. But soon the worshippers of the sun thought their temple too poor and too nude of ornaments. They sent for painters, and charged them to enrich the walls of the edifice with the master-works of their art. Foolish and blind people! They perceived too late that in thinking to enrich their temple they had in reality impoverished it; that they had only succeeded in

banishing from it the presence of their god, and that each stroke of the artist's pencil had deprived the edifice of a ray of the deity !

Church of Rome ! Thou thoughtest to enrich thy worship by introducing into it a pomp and a splendour borrowed from paganism ; and thou hast not been able to see that by enriching this worship, thou hast materialized it ; that by turning the attention to the external, thou hast diverted it from the internal worship ; and that by introducing into thy temples images, incense, candles, purple and gold, thou hast excluded from them the Sun of Righteousness, that God who is a Spirit, and who requires those who worship Him to worship in spirit and in truth. As for ourselves, our worship is simple and our temples are without ornaments ; but they remind us so much the more that the true worship is the worship of the heart ; and they will always be rich enough provided that we feel the presence of the invisible God, that God who "is not worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."

"He has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Here again the apostle directly combats the opinions of his hearers, some of which maintained that men had existed from eternity, as well as the earth which he inhabited, while others imagined that men, in each country, were a produce of the ground ; the Athenians, indeed, prided themselves on having descended from no race of man, and gloried as having sprung from the very soil they inhabited. The unity of the human race is one of the truths acknowledged to-day by science, but on which the Bible has forestalled science by forty centuries. It is not long since a proud philosophy pitied people simple enough to believe in the existence of a single primitive family, or who admitted that the stupid negro and the rude Hottentot were of the

same origin as the civilized European. Now-a-days more profound researches have justified these assertions, and demonstrated the existence of a single primitive couple, such as Moses had described four thousand years ago. Some have studied the various human races, and have recognized that the differences which they present are explained by the alterations which, by the difference of the manner of living and the climate, are introduced into the organization of man. Others have studied the principal languages spoken in the divers countries of the world, and have found, in all these languages, common roots, which pre-suppose the existence of a primitive and unique language. Others have studied the religious notions of the divers peoples, and have found the existence of certain traditions which all the great nations held in common, evidently the ruins of a revelation originally directed to a small number of men. Thus, for instance, we find everywhere the traditions of a golden age of innocence, of the moral fall of humanity, and of a deluge.

The dogma of the common origin of the human race holds an important place in the system of biblical revelation. Because men descend from the same father, they can and must love each other as brethren; are subject to the same moral and religious wants; have participated in the same fall; and can be restored by the same salvation; and, therefore, the apostle insists on this point with his audience, who were imbued with an opposite doctrine.

“He hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.” It is God who fixes the boundaries of the nations; it is His sovereign will which regulates all the changes which the government and the circumscription of empires undergo. Nothing in this respect is left to the caprices of hazard, as the Epicureans maintained. The same sovereign voice which has said to the sea, “Thus far shalt thou go, and here shall subside thy billowing waters,”

is also that which, from century to century, says to the living billows of the peoples, "Thus far shall ye go." The philosopher studies, in the history of the world and on the map of the globe, the laws which preside over the migration of peoples and the revolutions of empires; but the Christian, rising higher, perceives above all these social agitations the hand of God who directs them in the light of eternal wisdom. All the nations are in that divine hand weak instruments, which it controls against their will, making even their passions subservient to the execution of His plans. Quarrel, peoples and kings, for a larger or smaller part of the narrow globe which you inhabit; march against each other in your foolish ardour, and inundate with blood a soil which should only be fertilized by the rains and the dew of heaven; pursue your phantoms of glory, insatiable conquerors; walk over the earth, adding triumph to triumph, and kingdom to kingdom. You will do nothing but fill the precise courses traced beforehand for your ambition by the sovereign Lord of the universe, and after having fulfilled them, you will disappear from the scene of the world. One, after having achieved the conquest of Asia, will die, in the prime of his age, in the midst of his triumphs, a victim of his intemperance; another, at the moment when he will have gained the diadem, the supreme object of his ambition, will be killed in the senate of Rome, pierced by twenty-three stabs with a dagger; a third, who but recently filled Europe with the noise of his name, will be "broken without a hand," according to the biblical expression, vanquished in the midst of his conquests by the rigours of a deadly climate; and all will only have travelled over the earth to further the purposes of that eternal Providence who fixes the boundaries of peoples and their destinies.

In His dealings with men, in the direction of the events of the world, God never acts arbitrarily nor without respect

to the welfare of His creatures. The design which He constantly forms, and which He pursues throughout all the phases of history, the design for which He calls men into existence and places them on the earth is, to lead them to know Him, and by that knowledge to be saved. "That they should seek the Lord," says the apostle, "if haply they might feel after Him, and find him, though He be not far from every one of us." God, indeed, has given to men all that is necessary for them to know Him and to serve Him; He incites them and urges them all without exception to come to Him; and if they remain strangers to the divine light, it is simply their own fault. Though, in consequence of the sin of our first parent, the knowledge of God is obscured among men, so much that instead of contemplating Him without a cloud, as Adam in the garden of Eden, they are reduced to seek Him as if it were by groping like blind men, yet "He is not far from every one of us;" each man still finds in the fallen creation light enough to condemn him and to render him inexcusable if he remain a stranger to the service of God. "That which may be known of God is manifest in them," the eloquent apostle teaches us in another passage, "for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

It is not even necessary, to learn to know God, that man should contemplate the eternal creation; it is sufficient that he directs his attention upon himself. For God is thus near to each of us, that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being:" not only He grants us life, which is the most elevated

degree of existence, but motion, which is less than life ; not only motion, but being, simple existence, which is still less than motion ; all that we do, all that we have, all that we are, we owe to God, and to the relation which we entertain towards Him ; and it is by a perpetual renewal of His creating action that we continue to exist. Here, as everywhere, the Bible is in unison with the results of sound philosophy. It is a truth too often forgotten that God “upholds all things by the word of His power,” and that if He withheld for one single instant that preserving action, which is nothing else but an incessantly renewed creation, the universe would return to its nothingness.

Since we thus draw our origin from God, since we live by Him and in Him, we are somewhat made similar to Him ; and St. Paul immediately supports this assertion by an authority which his hearers could not reject. “As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.” This citation is expressed in the original by a verse, which is indeed found literally in the writings of an old Grecian poet ;* other ancient authors, Pindar for instance, have expressed the same idea in almost the same terms. The apostle applies to the true God what the pagan poets had told of their Jupiter, who was for them the supreme god. This quotation from a profane author is not the only one of its kind which we find in the writings of St. Paul. Thus in the epistle to Titus he cites a verse of the philosopher Epimenides, and in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians he goes so far as to cite a dramatical poet,† some fragments of whose compositions have reached us. This fact proves that the apostle possessed, as we have already stated in our first sermon, a knowledge as extensive as varied, and that he did not disdain to devote himself to the study of profane literature. Let us learn

* Aratus, Poem on Astronomy.

† Menander.

by his example that Christian faith is far from being the friend of ignorance, as people have fancied sometimes ; and that there is a way of sanctifying human science by making it subservient to the progress of the gospel. The more varied and profound knowledge the messengers of the gospel possess, the better they will be able to serve the cause of truth ; and we have always seen that in the church of Jesus Christ the revival of faith goes hand in hand with the revival of knowledge. The reformation of the sixteenth century, in particular, offers a brilliant example of that holy fraternity. It was through faith, helped by science, that the reformers performed so great things, as it was through faith helped by science that St. Paul overthrew the strongholds of paganism, and created so many churches among the Gentiles. This great apostle, who, doubtless, was among men the most accomplished pattern of a Christian and a missionary, was a man of erudition as much as a man of faith.

“Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” What inconceivable foolishness is there in idolatry, since by it man (being made in the image of God) places God below himself, even below the brute ; man, gifted with intelligence and life, makes to himself a material God deprived of life and intelligence ; as if the workman could be inferior to his work ; as if matter could produce spirit, and death engender life ! We must, however, not forget that St. Paul spoke to the Gentiles of old Athens. We have here a piece of ancient history ; the question is of things past centuries ago. Doubtless, we must hope, for the honour of humanity, that a similar aberration will never again be found in a country enlightened by the rays of the Gospel ; that men, professed Christians, will never transfer to empty shades, to images of wood, silver, or stone, the homage due alone to the living God ;

that men, professed Christians, will never arrive at such a degree of superstition and folly as to carry such shades in solemn procession, to offer sacrifices to them, to address prayers to them, to burn incense, and to prostrate themselves before them as in the presence of the Deity ; but, if ever—may God forbid it !—such an aberration could be found in a Christian country and in a Christian Church, then the word of St. Paul—that word directed to the Athenians of old—would again become a full reality ; it would shake the dust of eighteen centuries, and rise, living and incisive, against that Christianized idolatry !

“ And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent ; because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained ; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” All the preceding part was in the thought of the apostle, but an accessory, a preparation for the great object of his discourse, which was to proclaim to his hearers the Gospel, the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ. Judging them sufficiently prepared, he tries at last to show that one thing needful, that unique theme of all his preaching, that thought which filled his whole life. “ God,” he tells them, “ who in past centuries has suffered the nations to walk in the ways of superstition and ignorance, has henceforward provided the means to deliver them from sin and ruin ; and I come to announce to you these means of renewal on His part. It is time that humanity rose from that abyss of darkness and corruption into which it has hitherto been plunged ; it is time that it prepared itself, by conversion and repentance, for the judgment of the sovereign God. That this judgment might be more equitable, God has entrusted it to a being similar to us, with the exception of sin. It is that same Man who can

alone deliver us from sin and condemnation ; and His divine mission has been publicly attested by the most brilliant of miracles, for He is risen from the dead." Hitherto the apostle had been listened to with attention, even, perhaps, with an interest so much the more lively, as the great truths which he announced were something entirely new to his hearers. But from the moment when, leaving general considerations, he lays claim to their personal sympathies, to invite them to repent and be converted, as soon as he wanted to touch those vital doctrines of the Gospel, which have been in all ages "a stumbling-block unto the Jews, and foolishness unto the Greeks," his hearers withdrew their sympathies, and he was not permitted to finish his discourse. "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked ; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them."

Yet the Master whom he had confessed with so noble a courage did not leave His servant comfortless. He had the satisfaction to see that by his word some chosen souls were savingly awakened, so much the more precious in his eyes, as their number was small. "Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed, among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." How joyfully, indeed, must the apostle have shaken hands with these new brethren and sisters, who had just been born into the life of faith ? How sweet for him to unite with them in the same prayer, at the feet of that Saviour whom they had learnt to know ! And what a comfort, on leaving that town of Athens, still abiding in so thick a darkness, to leave there, in the persons of those new disciples, a spark of divine light, the seeds of eternal life, a beginning of a Christian Church !

What befit, on that occasion, the great apostle of the Gentiles is a too faithful picture of what often now-a-days

befals the ministers of the Gospel. They are heard gladly as long as they confine themselves to the general truths of religion ; they are heard gladly when they preach on the existence of God—His greatness, His power, His goodness, His wisdom, His providence ; they are even permitted to preach on certain particular duties ; but, as soon as they touch the vital and characteristic doctrines of the Gospel ; as soon as they announce the eternal stumbling-block of the cross ; as soon as they insist on the necessity of an immediate and radical conversion, even for the most virtuous of men ; as soon as they preach the corruption of human nature, gratuitous salvation by the blood of Christ, regeneration by the Holy Ghost, the duty of renouncing the world—then they lose generally the sympathies of their hearers. Some violently rise against their preaching ; others are satisfied to shrug their shoulders, as formerly the wise Athenians. They are accused, like him they called a babbler, of preaching “new doctrines ;” and their courage would soon fail them if it were only upheld by the sympathies of their hearers.

Yet the Master, whom they serve, does not leave them comfortless. Their word, though misunderstood by the multitude, finds its way to some hearts ; there are, among their hearers, some Dionysiuses and some Damarises, who receive the word of salvation into hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit, and who become their joy in this world, and their crown of glory at the last day.

We (I speak of this church) are no longer,—I acknowledge it and I praise the Lord for it—at that first period of evangelical preaching, where that preaching raises the opposition of the multitude. Either they have at last accustomed themselves (hearing them always preached) to the doctrines of the gospel, or they have really recognized their truth and excellency. It is a fact for which we have to thank God that to-day the great majority of our hearers listen without dis-

pleasure, perhaps with sympathy, to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. But because many gladly listen to us, must we conclude that the souls savingly touched by the Holy Ghost, the souls who live the life of faith, are become the majority in this audience? Has the time come when we must preach sanctification rather than conversion? and instead of labouring to lead back into the fold lost sheep, have we only to feed, in the pastures of the Lord, sheep which already belong to Him? Alas! we should like to believe so; but, with respect to most of you, we are afraid that that subjection to the gospel of which I spoke, is but a purely external subjection; a simple adhesion of the intellect which has not yet penetrated into the deep recesses of the soul, which has not yet seriously interested the conscience, which has not renewed the natural life. It is not sufficient to come here each Sunday to listen to the preaching of the gospel with the same kind of pleasure you would feel in listening to music to which your ear has become accustomed: that gospel must become for you a living and personal reality; you must feel your sins and weep over them; you must give your heart to the Saviour; you must renounce the vanities of the world; you must live in the face of eternity; you must incessantly love and pursue holiness. Is it the greater number or is it the smaller among you who recognize themselves in that picture? I leave it entirely with your conscience to answer that question. If you are obliged to acknowledge, my beloved brethren, that though you have begun to turn your steps towards the promised country, you have not yet passed over Jordan; that, though having drawn near to Christian truth, you still only possess the shade of that truth; if, though loving and valuing the gospel, you do not yet personally possess the pearl of great price, the only thing needful, the secret of dying tranquilly, the assurance of your eternal salvation. Oh! if it be thus with you, do not stop

where you are : take a new step forward in that good way ; become Christians in heart and life, as you are already in intellect ; after having admired the Gospel of Jesus Christ now practise that gospel ; may prayer, repentance, faith, holiness become for you, no longer merely great and grand ideas, but living realities ; and may you know at last by experience the truth of that saying of the apostle, “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new ! ” Amen.





VICTORIOUS WRESTLING IN PRAYER.

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“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.—MATT. xv., 21-28.

HOLY Scripture informs us of two remarkable temptations which our Lord and Saviour passed through. The first in the wilderness, at the beginning of His labours; the second in Gethsemane, at the commencement of His sufferings. The former *after* the baptism of water and the Spirit; the latter *before* the baptism of blood. In each case it was a temptation of the devil. Of the former, the evangelist records,—“And when the tempter came to Him;” and of the latter He Himself says, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” In the wilderness the tempter sought to make Him false to the labours of His calling; and in Gethsemane to make Him fly from the suffer-

ings to which His faithfulness to God had led Him. But the Lord's holy will repelled and overcame the temptations of the Wicked One, not, however, without protracted and painful wrestling in each case; and the weapons with which He engaged in the conflict were simply the Word of God and prayer. His reply to each attack in the wilderness was, "It is written;" and, in His agony in the garden, He cried out to His Father, "Thy will be done." By these weapons alone He vanquished the tempter and all his wiles.

We also have to wrestle in our life, and to encounter many and various temptations. Each struggle is for us a temptation, and each temptation a struggle. Here the fight, yonder the crown: they are reciprocal ideas, but nobody is crowned except he strive lawfully. Our weapons in the warfare are the Word of God and prayer. They must never be separated, and if we wished to separate them, we should be obliged to give the former to wrestling, and the latter to suffering.

Of all the expressions of Christian life, prayer is the foremost. It precedes every other, and accompanies every other. All the acts of the Christian are surrounded and sustained by prayer. In prayer our life, in time, sinks into eternity; in prayer each individual act rises from the source of life—the living God; for the breath of God upon our souls brings our life into living connection with His life. The Christian's life is only so far a life in Christ as it is a life of prayer. Prayer is the breathing of the soul, the palpitation of the heart of the new inward man. When the breath ceases, when the heart no more beats, the man is dead. He who has ceased to pray, has ceased to live in Christ, has ceased to be in Christ. And the more languid your prayers, the more languid and dying is your spiritual life.

Prayer is a necessity for the Christian. A child cannot live without intercourse with his parents, a Christian without inward intercourse with his God and Saviour. Love cannot

exist without disclosing our heart, and love to Christ cannot exist without our unbosoming ourselves to Him. Love urges us to pray, and so does necessity. It is an imperative want of the oppressed heart to pour itself out and assuage itself in tears and words; it is an imperative want of the Christian's heart, in necessity of body or soul, to state his griefs to his God and Saviour, and to complain of them and to ease thereby his burden.

But prayer is not only a want of our heart, it is also a spiritual power; it not only reacts upon ourselves and upon our temper, it also acts from us outwardly on the course of things; it not only eases our heart, it also overcomes God's heart.

But God's heart is the power over all things, for in it is the origin of all history. He who has power over God's heart has power over the world. Prayer is power over the heart of God, therefore power over the world and its history.

It is an easy thing to overcome God's heart, and yet a difficult thing; easy, for it is love; difficult, for it is holiness. The highest prayer is that which wrestles with God, and the highest victory is that which overcomes God. But no one is crowned except he strive lawfully. Our text to-day presents us with an instance of such victorious wrestling in prayer.

It was in the midsummer of the year before His death that the Lord retired to the extreme north-west of Galilee, on the borders of the pagan Phoenicia, in the territory of the towns of Tyre and Sidon. His labours in Galilee had reached their greatest height about the time of the passover, and had won the widest fame. Crowds gathered around Him and followed Him. He taught them on the mountain, He fed them in the wilderness, He healed their sick. But in the same measure the enmity of His adversaries grew, and their opposition increased. Then followed a time of conflict with the Pharisees,

after which He retired to those far remote coasts, partly to avoid the opposition of His adversaries so as not to bring about a crisis before the time, and partly to devote Himself, in rest and quietness, to His disciples, and so prepare them for their future vocation.

There, then, it was that that pagan woman had recourse to His help. He wanted to remain hidden, but His fame had preceded Him, and the urgent supplication of the mother wrung from Him a miracle of healing. That pagan woman is the opposite of the rulers of Israel. They despise and condemn their Saviour, she confesses the Son of David, and her humble faith overcomes His heart. Twice we are told that the Lord marvels, once at the unbelief of His countrymen in Nazareth, the other time at the faith of a pagan, the centurion at Capernaum. Now at His side stands the Phœnician woman, who equally overcomes the Lord by humble faith. This is what our text presents to us. It shows us *the example of victorious wrestling in prayer*.

It teaches us, first, *what urges us to prayer* ; secondly, *what helps us to overcome in the struggle* ; and, thirdly, *what we win in the victory*. *The feeling of our want urges us to prayer, the perseverance of humble faith helps us to overcome in the struggle, and we win the blessing of Jesus Christ in the victory*.

I. *The sense of our want urges us to prayer*. The woman calls on the Lord for help. That is an example of prayer. For calling on Him who is now seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens is praying,—that is the true prayer of a Christian. But her want urges her to come to the Lord. It is true that, above all things, the goodness and grace of God ought to teach us to pray. But we are so slow to give thanks, that God sends us want to teach us to pray, and to give thanks too.

The woman in our text was aware of her want. “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is

grievously vexed with a devil." For a mother there is nothing more painful than to see her child suffering. And the sufferings of this child were of a particularly painful kind. We do not know what they were, but we perceive from the manner in which the mother speaks of them, that they must have been dreadful to look at, the child was seized as by a dark demoniacal power and tormented, and men were at a loss what to advise or to do. That was a true domestic calamity.

Our earthly life is full of misery. There is scarcely a house where anxiety and misery have not entered from time to time, and there are many where they have taken their permanent dwelling. He who before had not learned to pray, is likely to learn it then. For when God touches our children, it is as if He touched the apple of our eye. And he who does not know that misery, knows others. God seldom excepts man entirely from the misery of earthly life. Affliction enters the palace as well as the cottage.

It is true that men try to adorn life and to render it joyful. The ruins of the old world, on the coasts and in the countries of Asia, in Greece and in Rome, tell us of the glory of past times, and their poets have clothed them with the charm of youthful beauty. And yet, if the stones could speak, of how many tears and sighs, of how much unspeakable wretchedness and misery would they report! Even now we hear the complaints of the peoples out of the mouths of their poets. The songs of all nations of every age are full of lamentations, of wailings over the misery and wretchedness of this life, and the wisdom of their wise men is the praise of death. "To be never born is, above all things, the best for man, but for him who is born, run as quick as possible towards the gate of death." That is the wisdom of Hellas, and the later generations have no other. Misery has always been the same on earth, and will never retire from the present world. Only

the help which is given to man against misery is something different and better. And necessity shall help us to seek it. Necessity teaches us to pray.

Each of us knows what misery is. For in the first place each shares in some way or other the misery of those who surround him. For he would violate the natural sympathies of the human heart, and would be worse than an infidel, who inwardly did not feel and share what other men are oppressed with. Especially among Christians there is another bond of communion than that of natural sympathy. Are we not the members of one body? Thus from every side the sorrows of this earth, the misery of life, the afflictions of the church of Christ penetrate our inmost soul. But on the other hand each of us has also his own cross; the Lord excepts none. Those who seem to be more heavily visited must not compare themselves with others to whose house it seems as if misery cannot find the way and the door, and ask why has the Lord so differently ordered our lot? What is not at present may come in future, and what is not visible can invisibly exist. I repeat it, everyone has his cross. With one it is like a burden on the back; with another it is a thorn in the flesh; with a third it is perhaps a thorn in the spirit; in one case it is the pressure of the outward life, in the other the pressure of the soul; there it is the spirit of sickness; here it is the spirit of temptation, or both together. God knows why He has dispersed it thus.

But every misery is easily borne, as long as it does not become a misery of the soul. With it misery in the true signification of the word begins. Whether it come from bodily misery or not, it always remains the real, the proper misery. Its shape is various, its cross is equally heavy.

It is the experience of many of us that bodily sickness may easily become a temptation of the soul. But there are temptations of the soul even without sickness. We must ex-

perience and feel—and what I say here is certainly intelligible for many of you—that we have not only to wrestle with flesh and blood, but with dark spirits and powers which surround us, and try to shroud us in night. Tempting thoughts rise within us, which frighten us and make us flee, and yet again we feel ourselves attracted by them, and it is as if they were throwing a dismal and pernicious snare over our heads. They fix themselves in our spirit, besiege the gates of our will, and assail our heart. They follow us by day, and torment us by night, and cause their gloom deeply to fall upon our soul, so that we long for the time of which it is said, “There shall be no night there.” It may then be that we begin to understand the anxious cry of the woman of Canaan, and to apply it also to ourselves, and to say, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ; my soul is grievously vexed with a devil.

But he who does not understand this, can at least understand one thing, the misery of sin, a misery which all men share. No particular sins are required to feel this misery. And he whom sin causes to sigh, need not be, as pharisees are inclined to think, a sinner before others, but only an ordinary sinner. For the most honest man, whom it is quite impossible to slander—even when no man on earth can punish him for a single sin—is punished in his conscience for his impure heart. And that is a greater grief and a more painful suffering than particular sins. One may stifle one’s conscience, one may excuse one’s self in various ways against accusing thoughts, or shut the ear against them ; but there will be no peace within. In the last hour the long ill-treated conscience will rise and cry its accusations into the ear of the dying man with a power that will shake both body and soul. And even should it be silent then, it will afterward stand as an accuser before God’s judgment seat. There is no help till we surrender ; till inwardly we submit to conscience,

and suffer our soul and body to be pierced and divided asunder by it; till all our thinking and feeling be reduced to the one thought, *I am a sinner*. When our whole inward consciousness is restricted to that one point, so that we know, think, feel, see nothing within us but our sin, death, and God's wrath, then out of that terrible anguish the cry of our heart bursts forth: "Lord, have mercy upon me!" As the drowning man attaches himself to the saving hand and does not let go his hold, so the soul attaches itself to the hand of its Saviour in the cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Then the wrestling prayer for salvation begins, for it is begotten of the feeling of misery, of the misery of the soul. Let us now see what helps it to obtain the victory.

II. *What helps us to overcome in the struggle, is the perseverance of humble faith.*—Jesus is the conqueror; but Jesus we seize by faith, and with Him is victory. It is, therefore, above all things, necessary that we seek Jesus, and also that we do not let Him go. In both respects this pagan woman is for us an incomparable model.

She has heard of Jesus—of His helping power and His love, that urges her to have recourse to Him. She repeats her prayer; but He remains silent. The disciples intercede for her; they meet with a rebuff. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"—she is not related to me. She follows Him into the house in which Jesus went, and worships Him, crying "Lord, help me!" She cannot say more in the violent agitation of her heart. Then He answers her—but how? "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." We should not wonder if she had risen and gone away, touched to the quick. What she requested was nothing wrong; and not for herself, but for her daughter. But this is just what causes her not to be put out, and not to be rebuked. And if He pushed her away with His foot, she

yet would clasp His feet and say, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." "Truth, Lord!" Truth, Lord!—and with that word she overcomes Him; to that word He can refuse nothing. Truth, Lord—Thou art justified in calling me so; "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table;" grant me, then, what is not refused to those! Therewith she gains the victory. O woman! great is thy faith; thou art powerful with God and with men, and hast prevailed. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." By that faith she pressed into the kingdom of God.

From this narration we learn two things—we must seek Jesus, and we must not let Him go.

In the uneasiness of our heart and the aspiration of our soul, we never are at rest and never enjoy peace till we come to Him; and when we travel over all the world, the home of our soul is only with Him. Here it is easy to make tabernacles and to dwell in peace; for we are created in Him, and redeemed by Him, and so joined by the bond of His Spirit with Him, that we cannot tear ourselves away from Him. In His word He draws near to us, and reveals His holy and lovely image, which captivates our hearts and causes us to bow our knees in adoration; and when we forsake Him, and depart from the path of life, His Spirit strives within us, and gives us no rest till we return with prayer, and fall low at His feet, and ask for His pardon and His love.

All our misery, bodily and spiritual, should urge us to have recourse to the Divine Helper. It is only Thou, O Lord! There is no other who can help but He who in former times went about doing good, and even yet is calling all those to Him who labour and are heavy laden to give them rest. If no other thing brings us to the Saviour, the misery of our soul, at least, must bring us to Him. We nowhere else get rid of it but at His feet, and never become joyful until from the bottom of our heart we have learnt to

cry, "O Lamb of God, unspotted, have mercy on us! O Lamb of God, unspotted, leave Thy peace with us!" Here true redemption begins, and with it deliverance from every other misery.

My beloved brethren, the Lord has promised, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." He has been lifted up to the cross, and then to the throne; but even at the right hand of the Majesty on high He is the Lamb of God. It is the Lamb of God who draws every one to Him. The word of the Lamb of God led the first disciples to Him; His death on the cross changed the shyness of a Joseph of Arimathæa and of a Nicodemus into an open confession; and all the blessed spirits in heaven praise Him. Shall we be missed among His confessors?

When we see Him on the cross, suffering and dying in holy obedience, His precious blood streaming down on the old sin-cursed earth, and His soul wrestling in unutterable anguish, we feel it is the sin of the world which He is bearing. Yea, it is the wrath of God against *me* which He experiences and suffers. Jesus is no stranger; He is as closely related to us as our sin is.

"O Lord, what Thee tormented
Was my sins' heavy load;
I had the debt augmented
Which Thou didst pay in blood."

In Him our sin is crucified; with Him our guilt is dead; with Him we shall find rest for our souls, and help and comfort in every other misery; for He was a helper, and will be a helper to the end. He who came to destroy the works of the devil is now, as well as of yore, mighty to free us from every anguish of the soul and from every temptation of Satan. Only we must carry nothing of our own with ourselves, and lay no claim to proper justice; but simply trust free grace, and

put our whole soul into that one plea,—Have mercy upon me !

And then we must not let Him depart. If He goes away we will follow Him ; if He seems to be stern, we will become the more urging ; if He hides His face, we will cry the louder ; if He will not listen, we will assail His heart. Thou hast said, “ Seek ye my face ; therefore, Thy face, O Lord, I will seek ” We well know what He means. Every *No* of Jesus is an *Aye*. It is true we deserve none of the things we pray for, nor are we worthy of them. How dare we appear before His presence ? Truth, Lord,—“ yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Oh, if we only receive the crumbs from His rich table, we shall be satisfied. Even if we are the last in His kingdom, suffice it that we share His grace. If it is only one look of His eye ; only one glance from Him. If we are not allowed to rest on His breast with John, we shall be satisfied if only with Thomas we are permitted to behold the print of the nails. Oh, we would run a thousand miles for such happiness as Thomas’s, although we deserve it as little as he did. “ Truth, Lord : ” yet, “ I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” And when we have become quite exhausted in wrestling with Him and all our strength is broken, when, so to speak, “ the hollow of our thigh is out of joint,” when we can only cling to Him and cry, “ I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me,” even then we shall overcome, even then He will declare Himself to be vanquished.

Here we see—and that is the third part of our meditation, at which we will stop one moment longer—*what we win in the victory,—viz., the blessing of Jesus Christ*. “ Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” That is a wonderful word, “ *even as thou wilt.* ” To whom does it apply ? To him who first has sacrificed his self-will, and has learnt to say, from the bottom of his heart, Lord, even as Thou wilt—not as I will, but as

Thou wilt, "Thy will be done," to him the Lord answers, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" for God's and man's will are then become one. Just before almost powerless, now almost almighty. The Lord makes His will and power serviceable to their will—That is a wonderful change. That is the power of prayer. It is the victory over the heart of God, and God's heart is the power over all things.

Dear brethren, not the outward answering of prayer is the main point, but that we win God's heart. The outward help is only a pledge of this inward gain, and has its value only in this inward experience. But this is of infinite value. In the heart of God is the source of everything, the ground of this and the future world. He who wins God's heart, wins everything. A child of God is lord over all things.

Now, indeed, only by faith, but in the future world by sight. When Jacob had wrestled with the angel, and had obtained the blessing, he called the place Peniel, "for I have seen God face to face, and my soul is made whole.* And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh." He who has wrestled with the Lord in prayer and has received the blessing "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," his soul is made whole, and a sun has risen upon him, even the glorious Sun of Righteousness. But as long as we walk in the flesh, we are sick; yea, we are only whole when we are sick, and only strong when we are weak. In the future world another sun will rise upon us, then shall we see the Lord face to face, and body and soul will be made whole in the completeness of eternal salvation. Amen.

* Luther's translation.





THE CHRISTIAN COURSE.

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"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."—HEB. xii., 1—3.

44 **W**HEREFORE criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Such was the order, which once in a decisive moment, the Lord gave to Moses, in a tone which suffered no contradiction. And yet there has never sounded in any man's ears a command seemingly more unreasonable and more difficult to fulfil. Go forward, Lord? To do so there must at least be a way, and here there is none but through the midst of the billowing waves. On both sides are impassable mountains, and behind the enemy is pressing nearer. But, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward," thus runs unalterably the Lord's command; and Israel must proceed, trusting alone in God's word, along a path which seems to be inaccessible, through a region where at each new step new dangers surround them, towards a country of which they have heard

much but have not yet seen anything. Go forward! I seldom read these words in the sacred history, but it seems to me that I hear the inward voice which is still speaking to every Christian. To stand still is nothing less than to go back, and if that word be true in common life, it is still more true in a higher signification; that is to say, of the spiritual life. And, indeed, they do not know the Gospel who are of opinion that the disciple of Christ must always be satisfied with what he was in the beginning, without striving after what he is to be in future times. Nowhere in the natural and moral worlds has the Author of all things commanded us to stand still, but everywhere to go forward. The flower-bud forces itself towards the light, the sun always pursues his lofty course, and the spirit of man, more elastic than the flower-bud, and restless as the sun, does likewise know no stagnation on the way of its endless development. Forward is the watch-word of the youth, in his incessant working and striving, till he has attained the long-wished-for end. Forward is the watch-word of the age, from darkness to light, from confusion to order, and, perhaps, from strife to victory and peace. And should it not be the Christian's law? He of all others should go on to perfection, should grow in the knowledge and love of God. Forward, on the one right path, traced by God Himself, must be the motto of Christian life. Winning heaven or losing it, are, doubtless, momentous words; but slumbering when God calls us to watch and work (terms not less significant), is a sure way to deserve the name of a "wicked and slothful servant." No sound tree without vegetation, no sound Christian life without the fervent desire to go from light to light, from strength to strength, in living fellowship with Christ. And thus, if anyone be a man of progress, it is the true Christian. Antiquity tells us of an excellent pagan who always maintained that he had not yet done anything so long as some-

thing remained for him to do. Those are the best Christians who follow the example of this pagan in their daily life. Those who after having first been "apprehended of Christ Jesus," are able to say with St. Paul, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." That we cannot picture to ourselves that prize too great, or this calling too high, is an assurance I venture boldly to express, and therefore I have selected the beginning of the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which contains some of the loftiest passages in the apostolical writings. Next to the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the thirteenth of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, this, and the preceding chapter, addressed to the Hebrew Christians, present the finest memento of the spirit of primitive Christianity.

The words of our text involuntarily attract and captivate us. There is only a simple and short expression to be explained to place us on the heights of contemplation. The words were directed to Christian readers living in Palestine, where, before Jerusalem's desolation, the Mosaic worship was celebrated in all its pomp, and the bond, with former brethren in the faith, was more outwardly than inwardly broken. The ancient splendour of the temple had for their hearts, or rather for their imaginations, its alluring side; and already they ran the risk of "drawing back unto perdition," instead of clinging to the fiercely opposed faith of Christ. To guard them against such apostasy the writer has unfolded for their example the historical scroll of former sufferers, and, in brilliant colours, has immortalized the names of the heroes, who by their faith achieved glorious victories. To rouse them to follow the steps of such illustrious forerunners, he clothes his exhortations in figurative language, borrowed from the Grecian games, yet perfectly intelligible to his readers,

through the Herods these games had, in latter years, been introduced at Jerusalem and elsewhere, to the admiration of many. Of the various games thus introduced, the Apostle chooses the running match as figurative of Christian life, and almost every expression he uses is borrowed from that game. As the runners along the open race-ground were surrounded by thick crowds of spectators, who by words and looks encouraged them, so Christians also are "compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses." By this figure he testifies to them of the triumphant power of faith in those who now in their turn have become spectators of the contest. A multitude thick as a cloud is looking down from heaven upon their brethren in the race below. As he who would win the prize got rid of everything that obstructed his motions, so must Christians "lay aside every weight" which might impede them; besides, what is here especially named "the sin" (unlimited as it is), "which doth so easily beset us?" The original word, which is only once found in the New Testament, may be explained as a snare thrown cunningly by a treacherous hand over the runner to stop his progress. And as the latter felt greatly encouraged, when he looked up to noble fore-runners, and to the glittering crown which at the end of the hippodrome the legal umpire held stretched out, so must Christians uninterruptedly look up to Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith." Author of faith, —properly founder, forerunner, guide,—because He Himself above all others preceded His people in the most perfect way. Finisher of faith, because in the days of His flesh He reached the highest and most perfect degree of faith. "For the joy that was set before Him," with his eye fixed on it, "He endured the cross" (the first and only instance in which the writer introduces this offensive word to his readers) joining with it, "despising the shame," but now is triumphing and resting in glory from the strife; "He has set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Here, as is ordinarily the

case in this Epistle, the glorification rather than the resurrection of the Lord is put in the fore-ground, and used as an argument to run with perseverance the course which God has set before us. "Consider Him," he adds, because the figurative language is still kept up, "that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," and especially the contradiction of which the cross and shame were the bitter fruit, "lest ye," always in the race, "be wearied and faint in your minds." He designedly expresses himself less strongly than he might do, and only mentions the contradiction which the Lord, while on earth, was obliged to bear, desirous as he is to bring the Saviour still nearer to those "who had not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." We can easily understand that such exhortations, in such a form, must have greatly affected the Hebrew Christians; and the more so, as the writer not long after sealed his faithfulness to the Lord by his blood. Thus he himself increased the cloud of witnesses to which he pointed, and by his word and example calls to us after so many centuries, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? *So run that ye may obtain!*"

We do not for one moment overlook the difference which exists between that time and the present, and yet, deducting this difference, the harmony is so great that I may, with full confidence, commend the spirited exhortation of the text to your observance and mine. The subject places us in the centre of that Christian life which is nourished at the Lord's table, and erects for us once more the cross of the Lord, that there we may see ourselves united in the spirit with all those who love Him in sincerity. If there be one here who still denies the proper calling of a disciple of the Lord, we shall clearly point it out to him. If there be another who considers this calling a trifling matter, we shall combat his prejudice. If there be a third, who despairs of his ever reaching the mark

put before him, we hope that courage and strength may be poured into his fainting heart. *The Christian course*, with all its *difficulties*, but also in all its *glory*, is the substance of this sermon. When we have put both before you in the light which our text presents, we will, in conclusion, cast an inquiring look upon ourselves. But, above all, we will lift up our eyes to Thee who art faithful to Thy promise and invisibly nigh ! God of all grace, make straight paths for our feet, let us run in the way which Thou hast revealed to us, and gird us also with courage and power from above, that we may follow Thee without becoming weary or faint, Amen.

I.—“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Thus speaks the voice of God to each of us, for in the main point the Christian calling is the same throughout all the ages. But what think ye of the claim which the text brings before us ? “A light claim,” says the superficial man, who builds towers without counting the cost. “A heavy, impracticable task,” sighs the pusillanimous man, who looks but to his own weakness, and not to the strength of the Lord. I can neither admit the one nor the other, and this whole sermon will be a combat against these two dangerous errors, carried on with the weapon of the Word of God.—Thou art of opinion, child of the world, that it is an easy matter, to run the Christian race. I deny it : the road is as extensive, the task as difficult, the danger as great, as is stated here and everywhere in the Word of God.

It was no short race which the prize-runner in the Olympic games had to make. However, the distance could be measured, and the sharpened eye could see from afar, at the first step, the post marking the goal. How entirely different is it with that race which opens before the Christian ! It is as we have already heard—the Author and Finisher proved it—a course *of faith*, just as long as life ; and who can express what is contained in that one word ? I am aware that the

world, which finds its satisfaction in the noise it makes, thinks that nothing is easier than the Christian life, and confidently asserts that our responsibility cannot be a heavy one, since we lay more stress upon faith than upon conduct. But this only proves that the world judges of what it does not understand by experience, for "*we walk by faith, not by sight.*" I use the word faith in the wide sense in which the writer of this Epistle employs it—in the sense of unbounded confidence in all that God reveals and promises to us in Christ, and I maintain that the habit of looking up to those invisible and eternal things is just that which characterizes Christian life. While the child of this world lives on what and for what the eye of the flesh beholds, the Christian turns his face and heart towards things which cannot be perceived by sense, and yet in his estimation they have far surer and safer existence than those earthly things which glitter to-day and to-morrow fly away like a shadow; and thus the life of him who has given his heart to Christ becomes a life-long way of faith. He views around him a world which in many respects deserves to be called a chaos, and yet he believes in a God, who creates light out of darkness, and who remains eternal wisdom, though His government of the world seems to be folly itself. He views within himself an abyss of guilt and ruin, and yet he believes in a Saviour, who has accomplished everything for him, and will certainly also finish the good work in him. He views before him death, the grave, dissolution, and yet he believes that on the confines of time the portal of eternity opens, and that true life only begins where the worldling says that all is over. We often hear of revolutions and changes, but what a revolution and what a change must take place in a stubborn human heart, before, under the eyes of an omniscient God, it can say, "Lord, I believe!" Alas! we are sensual though required to cling to invisible things. We are distrustful, though required to extirpate

every doubt from our heart. We are selfish, though in the race that is set before us we must cease living to ourselves. Yea, I well understand that believing and fighting are words of the same signification, and that there is no temptation so frequent and so fiery as that which draws from the Christian's heart, the sigh, "Lord, help thou mine unbelief!" How much grace is necessary to enable us to choose a life of faith and thus to break with our old self and with the sinful world. How often do we resemble the mariner who professedly sets out to seek a new world, and yet still clings to the coast of the old! But I will suppose the decisive step has been taken; ye have not only entered the course, but girded yourselves to the race; the bar is lifted, ye are happily placed in the way; but do not think that with this everything is won. In one respect it is so, and yet in another there is nothing won. If anywhere, here is the proverb true, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." A good beginning is half the work in spiritual progress, but the half is not the whole, and that whole is far from being achieved. Regeneration is indispensable, but the newly-regenerated man is only a child; the child must become a youth, the youth a man and a father in Christ. Inestimable is the beginning of faith in the heart, and most blessed a sincere conversion; but the great deed done in the soul must become a fixed state, the surrender of faith must become a life of faith, and conversion must lead to sanctification. The beginning of our personal spiritual life is the first step in the race, but that beginning necessarily implies continuing. If your faith be sincere, it must make itself known as living. If it be living, it will be well founded and steadfast. If it stand fast, it will also become fruitful. If it be fruitful, the thirty-fold will become sixty-fold, and the sixty-fold a hundred-fold. Have you really come to the Saviour? Then take his yoke upon you. Have you taken that yoke? Then bend under

his cross. Are you at home in the school of affliction? Then rest not, till in submission, in love, in courage, you show the image of the Man of sorrows. These are only hints, but enough to point out to you a race which comprehends the whole life. The faith of the youth must by-and-by become the strength of the man, and the strength of the mature man in a higher degree must become the support of the old man, or of what use is our choosing the Christian course? Even the grave is not a termination, but a point of repose, where the road to perfection only turns to go straight to the Saviour's throne.

How exacting then is the claim which we must unconditionally take upon ourselves in the Christian course. We cannot conceal from each other that from no one is so much demanded as from those who have chosen that course. Let me remind you of the words, "lay aside every weight."—They give us clearly to understand that there are weights which have become more or less pleasures to us, and of which at present we do not wish to be deprived. Yet it was necessary that the prize-runner got rid of everything, although perhaps in itself useful or agreeable, that could prevent him reaching the goal he had in view. And thus also it is necessary that the Christian who desires to walk in the path of faith should part with everything which retards his spiritual progress. "Lay aside every weight." I should like to know all that the inspired writer includes in this. There are so many rooted prejudices, so many earthly cares, which hinder us from contemplating eternal things, and worse than all there is the indolence of our hearts which, when we have only made a few steps in the race, whispers to us that it is now time to rest. Alas, how many would have been already infinitely more advanced, if they only had had resolution enough to cast off from their shoulders all that they are carrying unnecessarily. There is no Christian who is not likely to have a certain over-weight of earthly care, of joy, of distraction of which he must get rid, or he would do better to leave the course wherein he cannot

expect to advance, Yea, how much easier would the course become to some, if, instead of the question often inspired by carnal appetite, "Is this really dangerous?" They should ask that other question, "Is it likely to further the development of my spiritual life?" But why do I speak of some? All are reminded of a weight which must be laid aside; and the Apostle adds "and the sin which doth so easily beset us." This is much more expressive than the preceding words. We perceive the traitor who secretly follows the prize-runner, and before any one observes it, throws a snare around him in which his foot gets entangled. In this you see the nature of your besetting sin. Runner in the spiritual race-ground, throw off every weight, or the enemy will overcome you. Does the flesh attract you? Lay aside that weight, or running after an invisible crown will become more difficult with every step. Are you held fast by your earthly goods? Lay aside that weight, or you may become like Lot's wife, who was led out of Sodom, and yet never reached Zoar. Do you suffer pride to rule within you? Lay aside that sin, or it will ensnare your foot, and you may fall before thinking of stumbling. You have indeed a heart for the Lord, but yet you look anxiously to men to know what they say of you! Lay aside this weight, or, as true as God is living, the fear of man will become for you a fatal snare, and you may sink down to-morrow, because to-day you have looked aside instead of looking straightforward! But what am I doing, dear brethren? I name some sins, and pass hundreds silently which you can easily sum up yourselves. Renounce every sin: however severe the demand may sound, your own intellect and conscience unconditionally assent to it: as long as we are not in earnest we must at each step we take in the path be afraid of meeting with loss and disappointment. And yet I have not mentioned the most difficult demand. "Run with patience, *with perseverance*, the race that is set before us." What would it have profited the gallant

Greek, if he ran three fourths of the race, and then timidly retreated? What will it profit you to begin to follow Christ, if you turn back as soon as the way becomes difficult? Two ideas are contained in the word perseverance, namely, patience and constancy. That word expresses the most indispensable, although the most difficult, task of Christian life. If we were required to give to the Lord a great and shining proof of faith and love, it would, perhaps, not be so difficult to undertake that. But continually to follow the good Master, and remain unconcerned whether men cry, "Hosanna," or "Crucify;" to go steadily forward, though we may see brethren who entered the race with us give up the course; though at every turn we are scornfully asked "are ye also with Jesus the Nazarene?" though sometimes there be a secret murmuring within us against the path in which God has appointed us to persevere, not only in combating, but also in suffering; not only in the doing of what must be done, but in the bearing of what must be borne—is not this a heavy task, and can ye sum up courage enough to sound the full depth of that one word, "deny yourselves?"

But who then can accomplish the task? I cannot hear the question without fully perceiving how great is the danger to which the Christian prize-runner is exposed. The text alludes to perils from without and within. The Greek race-course was not only long, but difficult; no umpire had it in his power to temper the heat of the sun or to divide the wind. The slightest inattention or an apparent trifle might cause the beginner to miss his aim; or, if he ran beyond the appointed mark, death threatened, in the stream which was rolling close by, or in the hedge of swords, the points of which were turned towards him. No false step must be made, either to the right or the left, or the chance was at once diminished. Besides, had he himself no human heart, which might fail him as soon as he felt the first signs of weariness, or saw how others had passed

him. Oh, expressive picture of the dangers from without and from within, which are surrounding us also in the course of Christian life ! Though the path of faith be secure, it is not smooth and flowery ; we cannot tread it without being obliged daily to struggle earnestly. The world in which we live does not render the imitation of Jesus Christ easy, and if we have sometimes shown that we are not afraid of its threats, for all that we are not secure from its enticements. How decisive also may be the consequences of one single false step upon the whole of our spiritual life. Although our temptations are of another kind from those of the Hebrew Christians, they are not less manifold. They ran the risk of falling back from Christianity into Judaism, we of listening to the whisperings of the spirit of a modern heathenism, which continually wants to make us believe that the invisible things for which we are ready to forsake all, exist only in our imagination ; that matter is the only reality, and that every other thing is nothing but a note of interrogation, of which, properly speaking, one knows as little as the other, and with which we should have as little to do as possible. Nay, verily, the Christian race is not made in our times wider, opener, and calmer than formerly. Gross scepticism on the one hand, and refined sensuality on the other, have strewn it with stumbling-stones of all kinds and if we can count the prize-runners by thousands, we meet, alas, with thousands more who have fallen away. Add to all, the inward anxiousness of “fainting in one’s mind,” necessarily following “being wearied.” What Christian does not know those dark days when the sun of faith is covered over with thick clouds, and even the Israel of God must sigh like Jacob, “all these things are against me.” In numberless cases our courage sinks into the sand through which our feet have to hurry. We have already struggled so long and with so little success, that the hope of winning the prize seems foolishness. We do not advance in our own eyes, but are

still the same. We thought we were already approaching the mark, and all at once we feel ourselves repelled and thrown down by an invisible hand. We see how a fellow-combatant is sinking, we see how new enemies are rising; the struggle becomes more violent, and faith weaker in our heart. The first love grows cool, old sins revive; "What is the use of fighting, you will never win the victory?" whispers the tempter. Is it, therefore, a wonder if the sigh is heard, "O God, Thou knowest my willingness, but my strength is almost gone!" Child of the world, art thou still of opinion that the Christian calling is so easy?

II.—"No, it is difficult, it is impracticable," thus answers one or the other in his desponding heart; and this second error is ten times worse than the first. We have spoken of the difficulties of our calling, let us now turn over the leaf, and notice the glory of it. The text shows us the Christian course not only from its dark, but also from its bright side. We take back none of the former features, but we oppose to them others. Raise your heads ye who were accustomed to stoop! *Ye have a cloud of witnesses around you. Ye have the Author and Finisher above you. Ye have a conqueror's crown before you.*

We can easily imagine how much it must have spurred the Greek prize-runner that from all sides numberless looks were turned towards his steps. The interminable masses of men closely observed the progress of the runners, and encouraged them with deafening and cheerful acclamations. Certainly the nobler the people who thronged the race-ground, the more the runners would be concerned to please them. But what was the flower of Hellas' princes and people in comparison with "the cloud of witnesses," who surround the Christian here below. Review the long list in the preceding chapter; ye find there names which do not belong to one country, but to the whole of mankind, and how many might be added since

that Epistle was written ! Examples in their age of the power of faith, they are now raised from the militant to the triumphant Church, but even there heaven remains a witness of what is done on earth, and according to St. Paul's own word, the Church has become "a spectacle to angels and to men." The thought that we are watched in our career by those above, has in itself a peculiar power. "Soldiers," said the great conqueror Napoleon to his gallant men in the plains of Egypt, "from the top of those pyramids forty centuries look down upon you." May we not, with more right, remind you that from the regions of light a sympathising look is cast on our weakness ? I look up to those heights and I discover the forms of patriarchs and prophets who were set as an example to the Hebrews, the glorious figures of apostles, of martyrs, of fathers of the Church, of reformers, of teachers, but also of people of lower station—a multitude which no man can number. Are your departed friends also among them, to whom in their dying hour ye have promised that ye would steadfastly cling to Jesus ? They are now in better regions, the invisible witnesses of your doings, and see whether ye are keeping your solemn promise or wantonly breaking it. How much also in this respect is the Christian ahead of the pagan prize-runner ? Though a cloud of witnesses might praise or blame him, for the greatest part they had not run the race, and could only imperfectly judge about the hardships which were encountered ; but our witnesses have run and gained the prize. It is a heart-cheering idea, that each step we make touches the noble trace of a fore-runner ; that each burden we carry has already long ago been lifted up and borne by others. We often think that our troubles and struggles are without comparison, so that no perseverance can be fairly required of us ; but how that delusion flees away when we look at the cloud of witnesses. Ye are hated by the world. Abel was envied by his own brother, and Abel believed. Ye say that

all your work for the spreading of the Gospel is in vain. Noah, for a hundred and twenty years preached to deaf ears, and Noah believed. Ye sigh that too heavy a sacrifice is exacted from you. Abraham was obliged to raise the murderous steel against his own son, and Abraham believed. Should ye have no reproach to bear when ye persevere? Moses was obliged to forsake all the honours of Egypt for the reproach of Christ, and Moses believed. Continue the enumeration of men of faith and their hardships, but never forget that these were men of like affections as you, exposed to greater temptations, and upon whom divine grace did less clearly shine. I do not consider it as the least blessing that a look towards this cloud of witnesses is so confounding, and just on that account so edifying. See how, in the twilight of the old covenant, these all adhered to God and His commandments, as if they saw the Invisible; and shall we, whom the noonday sun salutes, and who are illuminated by his rays, make shipwreck concerning our most holy faith? What was possible under the law, should that be too difficult under the dominion of faith, and where *servants* of God remained steadfast, should we sink who call ourselves His *children* in Christ? Only think of how we should feel if we heard out of yonder mysterious cloud of witnesses a voice of complaint and reproach, "Shame upon men who are so much more blessed, and who are so much less faithful than we were?"

But our text speaks of the AUTHOR and FINISHER of our faith, and encourages us above all things to look up to Him "who endured the cross, despising the shame." In these lines we have the theme of the songs and thanksgivings of heaven! When God's only Son, who had glory with the Father, appeared here in the garb of a servant, He was also—we should not have attempted to say so, if the Gospel had not given us that liberty—called, as the least of the saints, to walk in the path of faith. Was He not, by His coming into

the world, so placed that all the truth became for Him also an object of faith and not of sight? Was not the experience of His own life diametrically opposed to His unshaken belief in the Father, in Himself, and in the final triumph of His kingdom? Was it anything else than that belief which combated and conquered Satan, whereby His will remained in perfect harmony with His Father's, yea that He could exclaim, "My God," when "My Father" died away on His parched lips? Thus to persevere to the end, and to find in the cross the ladder to the throne, in the crown of thorns the presage of the crown of life—verily, that may be called a faith, such as neither man nor angel has exercised, such as God alone can value! And for what joy? But that of looking at sinners, lost creatures surrounding His throne, and of seeing all His people as children in His Father's house. That was for Him the sweet drop, hidden in the bottom of His bitter cup; but that is also for the Christian an incentive to faithful perseverance, above every other. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith,"—what should be an absolute impossibility for him who makes that word the motto of his life? What an idea! The faith to which I am called is no other than that which my Saviour Himself has exercised. He requires nothing from us wherein He Himself has not preceded us! No bitterness grieves me for His sake, but He had first tasted the wormwood; no arrow is directed towards my breast, without His having felt the point! If I be reviled, they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub. If I suffer distress, He suffered both hunger and thirst. If I have a sharp thorn in the flesh, I yet do not feel the piercing agony of the nails of the cross. If we have learnt truly to understand that word, "looking," we shall no more so easily "be wearied and faint in our minds;" calmness and strength will reign in us. Yea, strength too, to the end, for looking up to the cross daily will become looking up to the crown. At the

Olympic games the first runner was not able to strengthen those who followed him at a distance. But our Forerunner to whom we look, looks also upon us ; He stoops compassionately to our weakness ; He shows us His glory, and in that glory an infallible pledge that we shall triumph in Him and with Him.

To gain the crown of victory was the runner's chief aim ; that distinction was considered so desirable, that even the most celebrated poets of antiquity could imagine no happier lot than that which sometimes befel the conquerors or their relations,—to die for joy. But our text points us to a more glorious crown, when it tells us of a Saviour who “is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Where the Master is, the disciples shall be, and those who suffer *here* with Christ shall reign with him *there*. Do not think that I wish to attribute selfish motives to those who have entered upon the heavenly race ; yet it is true that the Finisher of the Faith Himself has told His people, “your reward shall be great in heaven,” and what may not befit for a beginning, may yet serve as an incentive on the way, for even the Lord Jesus looked to “the joy that was set before Him.” Thus the Grecian runner lifted up his eyes to the conqueror's crown, which, high in the air, beckoned him on, and at that sight a new fire sparkled in his weary eyes, and fresh strength poured through his exhausted sinews and muscles. We may well repeat here St. Paul's words, “Now they did it to obtain a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible.” What was the reward for which men exerted their noblest strength ? A crown of olive leaves ; a place in the list of conquerors ; a statue in the race-ground ; a song of the poet ; freedom from taxes, and, in their old days, a daily maintenance at the expenses of the state. For us there is an incorruptible crown ; a place in the Book of Life in heaven, and the high destiny to be one day a pillar in the Temple of God. For us the song of welcome from

joyful angels ; freedom from all burdens and sorrows ; eternal refreshment from the Tree of Life, in the midst of the Paradise of God ! For the Grecian victor open acknowledgment by his whole nation ; for us open acknowledgment by the Lord, as His people, before His Father and before the angels of God. If any one should say I speak figuratively, let it be remembered that truth is infinitely more glorious than the finest metaphorical expressions can represent, so that could I even for one moment lift up the veil, I feel sure that only one voice of rapturous wonder would burst from your hearts. And seeing the Lord will give this crown gratuitously to those who persevere to the end ; should we then hesitate one moment ? Young man, such a prize is well worth the trouble of breaking with the world ; and if your struggle should be a severe one, remember that he who will reach the highest degree of glory, must also sacrifice what is dearest to him. Weary Christian-runner, yonder, where the bright light flows, hangs your crown ; oh, believe that not a single step is useless, and not one tear is lost ! Aged Christian, thou hast served thy Lord for many years, faint not in the few heavy steps thou hast yet to make ; soon shalt thou be called to thy glorious rest. But there is another important contrast. In the Grecian race, only one could obtain the victory ; and foreigners, women, and slaves were not even permitted to compete. Here all are called ; here the crown is attainable by all without any limitation ; here every one who truly begins and finishes his course with Jesus, is already sure of the victory. The crown is attainable by you, ye poor, tried, friendless ones ; and you, ye great and rich ones, who have become rich in faith, and great in the kingdom of God, a crown also for me ! O Lord Jesus, not right, but grace awards it to Thy followers, and presses it on our heads.

And now I ask you, *have you already chosen the Christian course ?* By nature, without knowing it, we walk in another

way—the broad way—which the flesh and the world show us, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, who are the friends of sin. There is also a finisher, “the god of this world”; there we have also a reward to expect, “the wages of sin is death.” Examine yourselves, dear brethren, whether that passage of Holy Scripture may not be applied to you, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” And as of old, not all were true runners who declared that they would try to obtain the crown, so now all are not true Christians who speak of their Christianity. I feel assured that at this moment many a conscience testifies the course of which I have heard to day is not yet my course. Well, it is better that ye confess that to yourselves than that ye walk on thoughtlessly and at last arrive very far from the eternal crown. But another question—*Will ye continue the course which ye have begun?*—draws a sigh from many of you. Alas, this suggests an affecting contrast between the Grecian runner and the Christian. There the bar was scarcely lifted and the voice of the heralds heard crying, “Run into the race O men, and become triumphing heroes,” when, as one man, the runners sprang forward. Here, when we show you the Christian course, and urge you to choose it without delay, one will not make a step, another heaves a melancholy sigh, and a third says it is well or not well spoken, and that the matter is worth consideration, and remains the same. O, ye fools and slow of heart, is then, indeed, the glory of heaven of so little value that to inherit it your heart cannot rid itself from the world? For ye know well that to unite both is impossible, as impossible as with each foot separately to walk in an opposed direction. The heavenly course must be chosen advisedly, yet immediately, unanimously, and irrevocably. By your eternal peace, what do ye choose? Alas, of the multitude who reject the heavenly course, how many are there whom the angel of death will, perhaps, unexpect-

edly stop in their sinful career, and conduct to their sad appointed place. And now the Author and Finisher of the faith stands here with open arms, and calls you to follow Him. He does not require *you* to get rid of every weight, but makes the gracious offer to take off all your burdens Himself. But some perhaps are asking, *Why do I advance so slowly in the heavenly way?* Undoubtedly because your habit of looking to the Finisher of the faith is not yet sufficiently clear and firm. A mote in the eye can spoil that sense entirely, and the spiritual organ is not less tender and fine ; therefore take care to preserve the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. Ye have already found that to advance is more difficult, according as ye look backward or sideward, and easier as ye look upward and forward ; improve your advantage. The Bible does not say, “look up to the cloud of witnesses,” who are above, but “look to the Finisher of the faith.” Look often at your course also as a course set before you by God, that will reconcile you to many things that are bitter in this life ; and consider further, if you are weak, that from the least of you nothing more is required than faithfulness ; of the triumph and the crown the Finisher of the faith will hereafter take good care. Leave with Him unconditionally the direction, the course, and the length of your path. In the Grecian race the lot determined what persons should run with each other, and ignoble jealousy often rendered the contest difficult. But here everything is determined by the highest wisdom, and united love and faithfulness will make the course so much the easier to the runners. And now I have yet a last question—*Does any one of you repent of, and will you forsake, the career?* In putting this question, I feel as if I saw out of heaven the Lord’s look directed to the multitude following Him. ‘So many go back in our days ; will ye also? The Lord has not need of any, He leaves you even at this very moment entirely free ; but I know what you will answer. “No, Lord Jesus,

going forward may be very difficult, but to cease from following Thee, is impossible. We often feel depressed, but what does the world offer to us? We *will* persevere in the contest, and better than in the past!" Do your hearts speak thus, beloved brethren? The Lord has heard that word, and will keep it in remembrance. Come, let us shake hands with each other in the spirit, as at the foot of His cross. "Speak unto My people that they go forward," thus sounds His last word, as His first. Lo, we are here, thou Finisher of our faith, we come, we persevere, we follow! Amen.





THE HEAVENLY COMPANY: A NEW-YEAR'S SERMON.

BY HERMANN REEDER.

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—REV. vii., 9—17.



YOU justly, my friends, expect something more than usual this morning, partly because of the very day, but partly, also, because our faith and hope at times stand in need of special strengthening and encouragement.

And this you shall have in God's name. In general, my dear hearers, we are not surprised if you sometimes think : We have still to hear the same thing ; the exhortations to repentance and conversion are, one after another, for ever sounded in our ears, just as if it were therein intended to stir us up to a life connected with a perpetual self-denial ; therefore this everlasting sermon on faith, on mortification of the outward senses, on the crucifying of the flesh, this same preaching we hear from one year's end to another. Ever are we required to make fresh consecrations, to pluck out the eye, to cut off the hand which causes us to offend, and at last we shall be expected to die a crucifying death. If for a whole year we have heard these sermons, these exhortations ; if for a whole year, in ever so small a degree, we have obeyed them, if a whole year through we have mortified our members which are upon the earth, if we have thus exercised ourselves aright in faith and in patience, and now pass over into a new year, yet is it again said to us : You have the same work to begin afresh, again must you be led, as at first, into battle against yourselves. But thereby our life becomes a perpetual dying, a constant crucifixion, a life full of pain and every other kind of suffering. And why this constant repentance, this everlasting restraint of the flesh, these sacrifices and self-denials ? Why this everlasting struggle and conflict against ourselves ?

Only hear me out, my dear brethren. On us, on me, lies the blame ; I have not hitherto made you acquainted with the object of such preaching. But to-day, what has been neglected will be attended to. For there is no more suitable day than the present for bringing before the combatants the crowns with which after their victory they will be adorned. To-day we seem like a host, gathered together at a point from which a new attack must again be ventured ; for with the new year commences also a new conflict. But

how can the general better stir up his troops to valour, than by showing them, before he leads them into the heat of battle, the spoils which must fall into their hands if conquerors? than by reminding them of the glory and renown which will thereby result to them, and thus giving them as it were a foretaste of the enjoyment to come? May I thus succeed this morning in strengthening your courage, and raising your valour in the Christian's holy war to such a pitch, that you, ever fixing your eye upon the high prize of your calling, may, whilst gazing upon it, cry out with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." And what words of Holy Scripture will better secure our object than those I have already read to you? John had up till this time seen many things—all the hindrances and disappointments with which the Church of Christ has to contend on earth; and now the Lord raises him above the bounds of time, and lets him gaze not only upon the struggles of the Church militant, but also on the victories of the Church triumphant.

A single look at this glory must make us forget all the troubles of time, and raise our hearts above all the mountains of difficulty which oppose us in our fight of faith on earth. Well now, learn why we have here below these conflicts.

Here we are still in the Church militant; and if in our temples God's people have often been so blessed that David

desired above everything else ever to be able to go to the temple of the Lord, to take part in the delightful and heart-refreshing service of God ; yet is this enjoyment but an idea of the joy and bliss which will yonder be possessed in the Church triumphant, in the imperishable temple of God. Let us approach this temple a little nearer. John calls it a temple, not, however, so much because heaven is to resemble the structure of a temple, as rather on account of the psalmody, the songs of praise and thanksgiving, which are sung in the temple.

Oh, no, there is no building which could better be compared with the dwelling of God and the saints than a temple !

Picture to yourself the greatest palace, fancy it adorned with the choicest and most beautiful objects of unparalleled splendour, and such that the like of it in size, beauty, and expense cannot be found in the whole world ; and even then you have no idea of the dwelling of the righteous. In the midst of this abode there is a throne, on which, as John says, are seated God and the Lamb. Christ, our Saviour, who even from eternity was compared to a lamb, because He would bear the sin of the world, because He would gladly and patiently bear it, and because He would be slain for us, as a lamb without blemish and without spot, which openeth not its mouth, but is dumb before its shearers. This must not, however, in every point be understood literally, but only that our Father, reconciled to us through Christ, and His beloved Son, our Redeemer, constitute in heaven that nature to which all others are subordinate ; because all salvation and blessedness flow therefrom ; and because God is a Spirit, and, as a Spirit, everywhere present. Man will there also enjoy His presence everywhere. John says, in one of his Epistles, that we shall see Jesus as He is ; and this is the meaning of the Apostle when he says that numberless happy beings stand before His throne : elders—that is patriarchs, prophets, and apostles—

angels, and a great multitude of the spirits of just men made perfect out of all nations and tongues. But "stood before God" signifies also to serve Him there throughout eternity. Oh, the enjoyment of this ! And thus we see that Christians who on earth were so mean in their own eyes, and so misunderstood, perform in heaven one and the same service with the cherubim and seraphim. And in the service which they render to God and the Lamb, they are never interrupted, for they serve Him day and night. Here, below, they are only too frequently hindered in their zeal, but there they know of no interruption, for they neither have nor feel any more want or pain. "They hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither does the sun light upon them, nor any heat ;" that is, no affliction disquiets them any more. Yea, all tears are for ever wiped away from their eyes, for every cause of pain has the Lord for ever removed from them. When John says that He leads them to the living fountains of waters, he means that they are overflowing with joy and bliss. Oh, what a blessed service ! what happy beings ! to be permitted there to serve the Lord our God.

When the queen of Sheba came to Solomon and saw all his pomp and wisdom, she cried out with rapture : "Happy are thy people." But millions of times happier are those who are permitted to stand before God and serve Him. Justly, therefore, might Augustine say that to serve God in eternity is the same as to rule with Him, and to obey the same as to reign with Him. Even on earth there exists the closest and most endearing relationship between God and His children. But above, God is all in all, and the happy beings who serve Him enjoy the most intimate friendship with Him. Now, as among true friends there is a certain community of goods, it follows that He will grant the saved everything they wish. Cyprian says : "The saints of God will not only taste how good the Lord is, but they will be filled and satisfied with

His wondrous sweetness. Nothing will fail them, nothing will hurt them, and all their desires will the Lord, who dwells among them, gratify."

And oh, in this great enjoyment of the heavenly blessedness, peace, and rapture, they open their mouths, they cannot refrain from praising God, and proclaiming the blessedness they have experienced! And therefore commence they songs of praise, and cause one Hallelujah to resound after another. John heard them sing with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" And he heard all the angels, and all the patriarchs, and all the apostles in deep humility worship God and say, "Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

What a song! like that of the angels who cried aloud at the birth of the Lamb. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." And can we be surprised at it? Were not these angels, pray, from the midst of the saved? But if the angels on the plains of Bethlehem have already sung so rapturously, can the song of the saved be otherwise? What thanks and praise have they also to present to God and the Lamb, for the Lamb has redeemed them; and as a part of the joys of eternity will consist in the feeling that we are free from all sin,—perfectly free, quite free; so will a part of the songs of praise be sung on account of this release. But what a song! When ten thousand times ten thousand, as with one voice, commence one Hallelujah after another; one Holy! Holy! after another, intending thereby to say, "Thou, O God, didst make us to be happy, and even when we basely turned our backs upon Thee, Thou didst still love us, didst send us Thy only beloved Son: and with Him hast thou given us all things! And Thou O ever to be praised Lamb of God! Thou Saviour of the lost, didst purchase us

with Thy blood, and cleanse us by Thy Spirit. Therefore praise, and thanksgiving, and glory be to Thee, and majesty and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen." Such songs of thanksgiving do the Saints indeed sing, and all the angels say, Amen. And all the archangels cry, Amen, yea, Hallelujah, Amen, Amen.

How then do you like this abode, this society, and their employment? Would you not gladly exchange for this temple the clay tabernacle in which we go about on earth? And this is the dwelling to which we point you, this is the employment of which we would put you in mind, and it is these sublime enjoyments which we are permitted to present to you. Yes, never-fading crowns and garlands await the conqueror there. Oh! how great must be your longing to become settled after death in this temple, especially when you consider that there is a great multitude of those already there who are closely related to you, who here below were united with you in indissoluble bands, and whom you will there again recognize, when the Lord will raise them up with you. Yes, one has already a father, another a mother; this one a husband, that one a wife; thou hast a brother, and thou a sister; parents have their children, and children their parents, in this blessed eternity, in these heavenly mansions,—and they have palms in their hands, and are clothed with white robes, to denote their purity, guiltlessness, and joy; and whilst they unite in their angel-song with the holiest of all beings, they think also of you and cry to you, "Oh, do come, come and gaze upon the glory, and enjoy the blessedness, the love, which God gives in heaven to those who love Him on earth; come and take part in our bliss, and augment it by being with us, by enjoying it with us, by praising the ways of the Lord with us, and by falling down and worshipping with us before the majesty of God and the Lamb."

But you know, my dear friends, that nothing common or

unclean can enter the New Jerusalem, therefore John was asked, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" in order that he might lay it aright upon our hearts, that the inhabitants of heaven are all cleansed, and therefore pure beings. But he replied, "Sir, thou knowest." Whereupon an answer was given, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But what must we infer from hence? Just what is also said to us on every page of the New Testament, that is, that we must be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and that this cannot be done without tribulation. But to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb means to be freed through faith in Christ from the dominion of sin. But what is required in order to this? Ah! that knowledge of sin and the corruption of our nature, which is given us while turning to God; a godly sorrow or repentance unto salvation not to be repented of, true evangelical penitence, and, in fine, a taking hold of the merits of our Saviour through faith, with the consciousness of the forgiveness of all our sins; that is one work that must be wrought in us and and by us through the power of the Holy Ghost. By that means the cleansing is begun. Knowledge of sin is the commencement, repentance is a further stage, and faith that which seals it ours; and before we have attained to a living faith, none of us can speak of a real cleansing. *He* must cleanse us, for "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" And he cleanses us more and more after our conversion through tribulation, for we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. Oh, what spots must thereby be washed away from us—spots which disfigure not only our bodies, but also our souls. They are the spots of unclean desires which take up their abode in the natural man, and which have so eaten into our hearts, yea into our entire being, that we are through and through infected and poisoned

by sin. Oh ! what toiling is necessary in this matter, and what labour, in order to cleanse the body and the soul throughout, and how can this cleansing be accomplished except by sharp pain ? Ah, it is only through an out-and-out killing, through a complete crucifixion, that it can be accomplished. This is the meaning of the Apostle, when he says, " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." But, oh ! my God, what a torture is it to crucify one's self ! The death of the cross is a slow and, for this very reason, painful death. Observe, my devout hearers, it is only through pain that we attain to real purity ; [and because the purifying of our souls proceeds so slowly, and is connected with so much pain, Paul has called it a crucifixion. How many sins must then be slain on the cross, and oh ! how the old man of sin is brought under thereby, and how hard it is for him to give up his old ease, and how the heart struggles when it has for ever to deny itself its dearest lust. But what can be gained by such struggles ? As we are purified only by this means, and as without this purifying we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, we shall be under the necessity of continuing to insist on it both for ourselves and for others. I see then that this year also I shall be obliged, in the discharge of my duty, to insist on repentance and faith. How much you would rejoice to be saved ! Is it not so ? Oh ! it is your heart's desire to be saved. As I also wish nothing more ardently than that you and I should one day see one another at the throne of God, there is nothing else for me to do but to commence with this new year which we have just entered upon, afresh to comfort, to instruct and exhort you, afresh to lead you into the holy conflict, and animate you to wrestle and strive to excel. To those of you who are already brought from death unto life, who celebrate already the new and acceptable year of the Lord, because He has made all things new in you ; to those who are already as it were dead

to the world, who have already turned all their thoughts, all the longing of their hearts upwards, whose conversation is already in heaven, from whence also they wait for the redemption of their body ; to those who are risen with Christ, and seated with Him in heavenly places, who, with Paul, have a desire to depart and be with Christ, and in their hearts cherish no wish more ardently than to see the moment approach in which death removes all hindrances out of the way of their being able to love and glorify their Saviour, Redeemer, and God, to their heart's desire ; to those who have already made themselves familiar with death and the grave, and no longer are terrified at this foe of human nature, because they know that Christ, through lying in the grave, has sanctified their graves, and through His death turned their death into life ; to those who here have already commenced the celebration of the eternal Sabbath, and who therefore carry about with them so great a longing after heaven, because they would like to enjoy the rest and gladness of their souls undisturbed and in perfection ; to all those we cry this morning, and shall cry out to them the whole year.—Oh, hold out but a little longer ! But a few more rough winds which will pass over your heads ; a few more storms in which the bark of your faith shall perhaps be tossed about ; a few more steep mountains over which your heavenly way leads you ; a few more sharp conflicts, and the victory is yours ; hosts of the redeemed will welcome you, bring you to the steps of the throne, where you will receive the crown of life, and hasten with you through the glorious mansions in which you will rest for ever from your toils. Happy are you then, ye blessed of the Lord ! All the distresses of earth are forgotten, and your tongue will not cease to laud, and thank, and praise and triumph. But, my friends, it is to be regretted that all of us have not made so much progress. Perhaps there are only a few whose hearts are in such a state that

they can have a good hope ; many still halt between two opinions, and scarcely know whether to go forward or back ; they dread the conflict, and are afraid to do violence to their corrupt nature and self-will, and they go back rather than forward. You, therefore, who are only borderers, who shift the burden from one shoulder to the other, because you do not like to bear it, who would rather serve two masters, but by that very means give yourselves a great deal of trouble. Nay ; even you will we not allow to remain in this state ; for a half christianity is not much better than none at all. You know, indeed you do, that the watchword is, perfect freedom from sin and its fetters, for only a free spirit rises to heaven. But you acquire this freedom only through conflict. “ No one is crowned unless he contend lawfully,” that is, he obtains the crown through conflict. And shall you, in the midst of the fight, think of becoming fainthearted ? You see before you the palms and crowns of honour, and behind you the awful abyss of eternal ruin, and will you not seize courageously the weapons through a proper use of which you will most certainly win the victory ? Can you prefer the disgrace of an ignominious defeat, which is all the more to be held in abhorrence, because recovery from it will be impossible ? Will you bring this upon you rather than hear the shout of rejoicing in heaven which will resound at your victory ? No, you do not desire that, I know you do not desire that. But if you will not contend, you have nothing else to expect than what you are threatened with ; for there is no victory without conflict, and no crown without victory, But the severer the fight and the more courageous the conqueror, the more joyous will be the final triumph. Oh, fight unto victory ! Behold your commander, Jesus Christ, stands at your side, inspiring you with courage and giving you strength for the conflict ; overcome then your foes ! And oh ! soon will it be said of you also : “ They have come

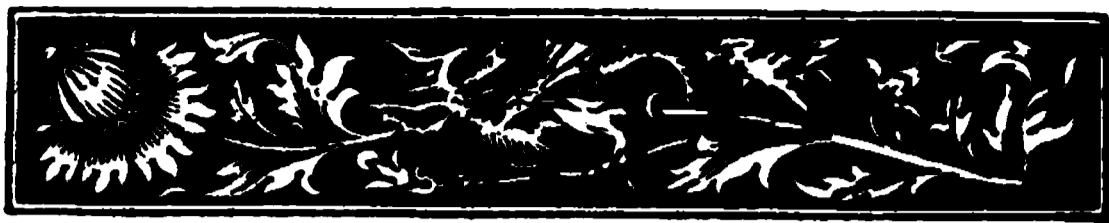
out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." But in a great army there are also faint-hearted ones, who let the sword drop out of their hands, not so much from an unwillingness to fight, as rather from fear, because they have doubts about the victory and dread defeat. It would be strange if there were not some such also among us. Oh ye timid souls ! who almost despair of having your wishes at last gratified, ye who no longer hold up your hands, and seem to have so completely lost your courage, why do you follow the Lord so slowly ? You ask : what can be accomplished by our help ? Only too frequently have we found by experience that we can do nothing, and that all we undertake comes to nought ! Therefore are we so dispirited, and our hearts sink within us. Just so, that can readily be believed, for it agrees with the experience of many of God's militant people, and even with the teaching of Holy Scripture, which tells us that we can do nothing. But whilst you have no confidence in yourselves, and you may even consider this a peculiar grace, you should never despair of Him whose strength will work mighty in the weak. No ! Cast not away your confidence in Him. Up ! fix your eye on Him who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ; who said to His disciples : " Without Me ye can do nothing, but through Me ye can do all things ! " Through faith in that perfect atonement, so perfect indeed that no more is to be paid, nothing added to that redemption price—an atonement which long ago has secured that salvation about which you still make yourselves uneasy : through such a faith comfort your dejected minds ! As soon as this faith is thoroughly revived in you, your powers will also be stirred up, the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaks better things than that of Abel, and which cries to you, mercy ! mercy ! will lend you new strength, and you will see yourself equipped for the new conflict, whilst it

is given you to strike your foes to the heart, to drive them off the battle-field, and hold it alone, and thus corroborate the truth : with God can we do great things, yea with God, with God our Saviour ! But oh ! how uncertain is it with an army if there are in it many who with the hope that the victory will nevertheless be won, retire from the battle-field, and seek the fruits more than the honour of the victory. This is the manner of all careless, unconverted Christians. They comfort themselves with the hope of being one day saved, no matter how they conduct themselves in their Christian calling ; but they thus make God a liar, who in His word has pronounced eternal damnation upon sinners who die in their sins. Now, whom should we rather believe ? Oh, we believe God's word rather than you, for we know from our own experience in what a dangerous spiritual state you are, and because your ruin is inevitable if you do not repent, and like the prodigal turn to God in Christ, we shall be obliged this year also again to take the field against you. But God grant that it may not be without success ! We will show you on the one hand all the love of that Saviour who is able to soften your hard hearts ; we will declare unto you the whole counsel of God, in order, as much as in us lies, to win you over to His kingdom. But to continue free from your blood we will also use all the means at our command to awaken within you a wholesome fear, and bring you to reflection ; heaven and hell will we spread before you ; the way thereto will we point out to you ; and then, through entreaties and threatenings, seek to bring you to the decision to leave the broad road that leads to destruction, and walk in the narrow way that leads to life. We will entreat, and in God's great name summon you, to receive the grace which is offered to you in Christ ; we will make use of all the knowledge which the Lord from time to time may give us, to rouse you up from the sleep of your sins, that Christ may give you light ; and if this can be accomplished in

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no other way than by making you feel as it were the pains of hell itself, should the Lord give us grace, we will even then not shrink from our purpose ; for we would rather see you in distress for a short time here below than lost for ever ; we would rather hear you cry out : “ What must I do to be saved ? ” than have you cry out with the lost in hell, Oh, woe ! woe ! May the Lord enable me to lead you all to the gates of the New Jerusalem ! May He forgive me all my sins, and preserve me in faith, hope, and love. May it please Him to make our intercourse with one another a help towards the salvation of us all. This, my beloved friends, is my first and most earnest wish for you and for myself ; for I know that all worldly good, without this, is of no avail. Oh ! see to it first of all that you are in the way to heaven, and the Lord your God will take care for the rest. Another wish have I not for you—another have I not even for myself—and that day will I consider the happiest of my life, on which I shall see the whole of my dear congregation, and all connected with them, walking in the ways of truth. Amen.





CONVERSION.

I.—*Its Necessity.*

By the late L. GAUSSEN, *Professor, Geneva.*

“There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!”—LUKE xiii., 1—5.



CELEBRATED preacher, of great Christian energy, and of powerful eloquence, being asked which was the predominating idea in his mind, while thrilling the souls of his hearers with emotion altogether so religious and so profound, answered, that he never entered the pulpit without reflecting, “perhaps there is in this assembly a soul who is about to hear for the first time the Word of Reconciliation; perhaps also there is one who is about to hear it for the last time!”

Oh! how the hearers of the Word would receive it with efficacy, if each one entered our temples with the thought, “perhaps the word of salvation will be proclaimed to me to-

day as if for the first time : or perhaps I shall be that hearer who is about to hear it for the last time ! What ! am I not told that this Word is the voice of my God Himself, that it is 'the glad tidings,' that it is 'for all people the subject of great joy,' and yet I have hitherto received it with indifference ! Am I not told that it is 'a mighty weapon, through God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ?' and yet it has hitherto produced but little impression on my heart ; I have not yet laid hold of it. I am like those unhappy persons whom the Lord described in His parable of the sower, who hear His word without efficacy, because they hear without understanding. Perhaps it will be announced to me to-day as for the first time."

But above all things how would the hearers of the Word receive it if they could say within themselves, "It is, perhaps, the last time that I shall hear the invitations of the Gospel, and the voice of my God and Saviour ; soon the scenes of this life of trial will all have passed away for me as a morning dream ; time rushes on ; eternity advances ; the Judge is at the door ; 'now is the accepted time' for me ; 'behold, now is the day of salvation !' "

Listen, brethren, in this disposition, to the voice which the Saviour of the world directs to you even to-day, and say to yourselves that if there ever was a subject which ye ought to hear with earnest attention and solemn realization of eternal realities, it is that which our text presents.

The Lord pronounced these words after a long discourse, in which He had urged His hearers to immediate conversion, seeing the day of salvation is fleeting, and uncertain as to the moment of its termination. Some persons who were present when He gave that exhortation, cited to Him, perhaps in confirmation of His discourse, the sudden death of certain Galilæans slaughtered by order of Pilate : to whom He replied, "Suppose ye, that these Galilæans were

sinners against God above all the other Galilæans ? I tell you Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Such is the weighty instruction of this day.

Having thus briefly explained the circumstances connected with our text, we hurry to arrive at the great lesson which is presented to us there. And for that purpose will occupy you first with the inquiry, *Do ye suppose that these Galilæans were more culpable before God than all the other inhabitants of Galilee ?* And from this will show you that *you all must also repent and become converted.*

Oh ! Word of my God, merciful Voice of my Saviour, mighty to cast down imaginations and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ, come and touch our consciences, come and speak to all these souls ! May we all hear Thee with the humility of a little child, with the attention of an immortal being ; as if we heard Thee on our death-bed, at the approach of our last hour, or at the brightness of the day of Christ ! Amen.

We can only conjecture the motive that could excite Pilate to profane the worship and the sanctuary of the Jews by murders too similar to the other acts already known of his government. Proud and passionate friends of independence, the Galilæans lived under the rule of Herod Antipas, and were not directly subject to the Roman authority. But, at the return of the Paschal and Pentecost solemnities, they came by thousands to Jerusalem, to join the other Jews who, from the remotest east and from all the provinces of the empire, came to celebrate the festivals there. It is therefore very possible that those of whom our text speaks had provoked Pilate's wrath by indiscreet and seditious words. But it did not require much to drive to the most cruel acts of violence this gloomy warrior, who hated them and their king, and who, besides, was so ready to shed blood.

Alas ! there is other blood which shall, at the last day,

cry much louder as a witness against this impious and cruel governor. The next year was to acquire for Pontius Pilate immortal infamy. On the following Pascal festival he was to deliver to death the Prince of Life, against the witness of his conscience and warnings from above ; completing the great sacrifice which the Pascal festival had pre-figured for fifteen centuries, and destroying the temple of God in the person of the Messiah.

Another catastrophe, less tragical, but not less fatal than the slaughter of the Galilæans, had just given to Jerusalem a new lesson on the necessity of preparation for judgment. The brook of Siloa, which, according to Jerome, was the only fountain from which Jerusalem could draw its water, gushing out from the rock of Sion, flowed along the walls which defended the city, and discharged, in the midst of delicious gardens and bowers, its limpid stream into the river Cedron. Now it was not long before this that a tower erected in the vicinity of that brook suddenly fell, and eighteen persons perished under its ruins.

This double catastrophe, but especially the first, had excited the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and formed, doubtless, the universal subject of conversation. All its causes were discussed, all the accompanying circumstances were repeated from mouth to mouth ; opinions were divided on the wrongs of some and the misfortune of others ; instead of saying to themselves that all these catastrophes, of which Providence makes us witnesses, are so many silent, but eloquent sermons, so many striking lessons from a long-suffering God. And though the Prince of Life, condescending to come down from heaven and to live among men, had walked some thirty months through their towns and villages, while His penetrating voice besought them to repent and become converted, it was then as it is now : the things of time and sense absorbed every mind.

Alas, it is thus from age to age we are occupied with the things of this life, only to forget the aim and end of life ; with the death of our fellow men, only to forget our own death which is approaching ; and with the judgments which God unfolds before our eyes, only to forget the eternal judgment and the tribunal of Christ.

Often we persuade ourselves that we are striving after holiness, and that our occupations are holy, when we show an interest merely external for the events connected with the kingdom of God. We satisfy our consciences by condemning Caiaphas, Herod, or Pilate, without drawing near to God, smiting on our own breast, or accounting for our own ways.

This was, doubtless, the case of those persons who, to testify to the Lord the interest they felt for the temple, public worship, and their Galilæan brethren, narrated to him what had befallen those whose blood Pilate had caused to stream with that of the victims, in the sacred porches where their devotion had led them.

But remark well how our Lord, at once leading back their thoughts into their inmost souls, teaches them the use which is to be made of these events.

“Suppose ye,” He answered, “that these Galilæans were sinners above all the other Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” And immediately, lest His hearers should not give to this saying its whole signification, but might think it contained some particular condemnation against the inhabitants of Galilee, the Lord seeks for a new subject, in the midst of Jerusalem itself : “Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all men (Greek : *debtors above all men*, doubtless alluding to the parable which precedes our text) that dwell at Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay : but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

As if He had said, "To make good My pressing exhortations, you have cited to Me the sudden death of these unhappy men, whom the sword of Pilate has so quickly deprived of their lives, and caused to appear so unexpectedly before their eternal Judge ; you are quite pre-occupied with this great misdeed ; it is even possible that the bitter party-spirit which animates you against these children of Israel, born under another government and another sky than yours, induces you to consider their death rather as a just judgment of God than as a martyrdom ; but, I repeat to you, take heed of yourselves, and consider such events as lessons from above, appropriate to render you serious and anxious for your own salvation. Do not suppose that these Galilæans, or these eighteen, were more culpable than all the other inhabitants of Galilee or Jerusalem ; I tell you, Nay : you are all sinners, all culpable ; you must all become converted ; and you yourselves who listen to Me, I have incessantly declared to you, *if you do not repent, you shall all likewise perish* ; and as they were lost for ever for this world, you will be lost for ever for the world to come. Be, therefore, not so vain of your name of Israelites, for I declare to you that 'he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly,' and that 'verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' "

Some commentators have thought these words a prophetic allusion to that frightful judgment, in which the too culpable inhabitants of Jerusalem, thirty-eight years later, "mingled their blood with their sacrifices," and miserably perished, either by the sword of the Romans or under the ruins of their fallen towers. We do not reject this idea, and we willingly admit that our Lord's words, though, no doubt, chiefly pointing to eternal judgments, may have also referred to the temporal judgment which was about to fall upon the Jews.

But let us not lose in critical researches precious time

which should be employed for our edification. A solemn appeal is directed to our souls ; a voice comes forth from the ruins of the tower of Siloam, and from the blood of these Galilæans, calling us to repent.

The exhortation of our text is a general one. It is directed to each of you as it was directed eighteen hundred years ago to the men of Jerusalem, as it will be directed a hundred years hence to your children's children ;—all must repent, all must become converted.

Conversion is, therefore, not a duty which only concerns Mohammedans and Pagans, and those vicious and degraded persons whom public opinion condemns, and who are judged by our tribunals. Throughout the land of Galilee, throughout the town of Jerusalem, throughout all the world, each child of Adam must repent or die ; all must become converted or perish.

This is, doubtless, the Lord's declaration, and it is also the uniform doctrine of Holy Scripture, which He commands His ministers to preach among all nations and to every creature, even unto the end of the world.

All the prophets, all the apostles, all the evangelists, declare to us that every child of Adam, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptised or not baptised, to become an heir of the kingdom of heaven, must experience, in his habits, in his character, in his affections, and in his thoughts, a change which is called indifferently *conversion*, *regeneration*, *renewing of the Holy Spirit*, *new birth*, *change of heart*, and which they designate by the most energetic expressions which human language can offer. They declare to us that, by nature, we are not in a fit state for the kingdom of heaven ; that we are all poor sinners, born in corruption, inclined to evil, incapable by ourselves to do good ; that we thus, by the just judgment of God, incur condemnation and death ; that for us the point in question is, not how to guard against being lost (we are

lost!) but to become saved ; that Jesus is called Jesus because He "is come to seek and to save that which was lost ;" that all Galilee is guilty, that all Jerusalem is guilty, that all mankind are guilty, and that "except we repent, we shall all likewise perish."

This is what the eternal Word has declared ; but this is what a world "that lieth in wickedness " never wanted to hear. It is against these declarations of a God who is love, who "hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that the wicked turn from his way and live ;" it is against these declarations, doubtless humbling, yet salutary, that the enemy of our souls, in every age, has striven most to call forth the pride of the children of Adam, "lest," as our Lord said, "they should believe and be saved." When our first parents had received from God this positive declaration, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," Satan who sought their ruin, told them, "Thou *shalt not* surely die." And thus it has ever been since the fall : while God tells us that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," and that if we do not repent, we shall perish ; the enemy tempts us to think, "We shall not surely die." While God tells us that we are all debtors, all guilty, all by nature the children of wrath, even as others, but that Jesus came to deliver us from the wrath to come, and to save that which was lost ; the enemy tries to persuade us that we are not under wrath, that we are not lost, that we need not repent. While God cries to us, "Make your peace with Me !" the enemy persuades us to say, "Peace and safety," when there is no peace. "They have belied the Lord," says Jeremiah ; "and said, it is not He ; neither shall evil come upon us."

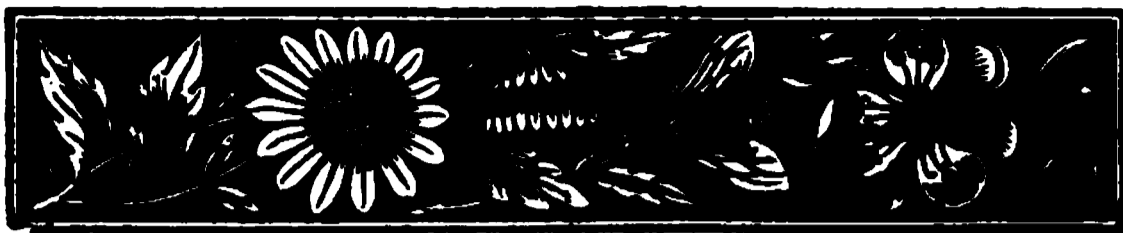
All must repent and be converted ; this is the whole preaching of our Lord, of His prophets before Him, and of His apostles after Him. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," that was the first preach-

ing of the Lord to Nicodemus ; and when he is astonished at a doctrine with which the Old Testament is filled, the Lord answers him, " Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things ? " And the whole mission of the ministers of Christ is comprehended in these words :—" I send thee to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me."

It appears then undeniable, from the Word of God, that we must repent ; we must be " born again ; " we must " circumcise our heart ; " we must " turn from death to life ; " we must " get a new heart and a new spirit ; " we must " be renewed and be transformed by the Holy Ghost ; " we must " put off the old man, and put on the new man ; " we must " become new creatures ; " and experience " a new creation."

I beseech you to compare these declarations, so positive in the eternal Word of God, with all that has passed in your life and in your heart, since the gospel has been preached to you. I beseech you to consider how vain and light must appear, at the side of such declarations, the ideas which so many persons among you entertain of religion, of the conversion of the heart, and of the way in which we must serve Jesus Christ. Some external forms, some religious exercises, where the soul remains cold and silent, some lukewarm and languishing acts of a devotion, always flagging ; some vague projects of a future conversion, rather than true resolutions and sincere undertakings. Oh ! what have these vain appearances, these pale gleamings of devotion, these cold shadows of piety, in common with what the Bible tells us of a true conversion when it is represented to us as deliverance from a state of death, as turning from the power of Satan to God, as a resurrection, as a new birth ? I beseech you, therefore, once

more to examine yourselves, with a serious solicitude, while it is yet time, ask yourselves whither all the cares, all the favours, all the joys of a world, "the fashion of which passeth away," are leading you? Of what avail will they be when it is found out at the last day that you do not belong to Christ, that "your heart is not right in the sight of God," that "you are still in the bond of iniquity," and that "you have neither part nor lot in the heavenly matter?"



CONVERSION.

II.—*Its Nature and Operations.*

By the late L. GAUSSEN, *Professor, Geneva.*

“There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or these eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Luke xiii., 1—5.

WHAT IS CONVERSION? A complete answer to this great question would doubtless carry us far beyond the bounds prescribed to this discourse; therefore, we shall be satisfied to present to you, in its principal traits, a certain number of questions which will enable you, if you are sincere, to know the real state of your souls in the presence of God.

Before proceeding to do this, however, it is indispensable to remind you of a fundamental principle, which too many people among us are apt to forget or overlook. It is (though we must doubtless know by their fruits the true children of God) that conversion is, properly speaking, not an external

work. The Lord looks at the heart; the heart must be changed. And as a tender father would reject with disgust the most assiduous service of his son, if he knew that that son, disliking his presence and having no love for him, only serves him by compulsion, to avoid incurring his chastisements, or to ensure for himself a better part of the paternal heritage; with so much the more right, God, who "searcheth the reins and who knows what is in man," cannot accept the worship of a slave, nor the vain efforts of a heart, where the creature has its throne, and where the Creator is deposed.

"My child," He says, "give me thine heart;" and again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" "I do not look at what man is looking at; 'man looketh on the outward appearance,' but I, the Lord, look on the heart;" and "though ye bestow all your goods to feed the poor, though ye give your body to be burned, and have not charity," that is to say, love in the heart, "it profiteth you nothing." God requires love from His creature; He wants to be served by love; love makes the life of heaven; love will never cease.

Conversion, I repeat it, is therefore an internal work; and, to use the definitions of the Holy Scriptures, it is "the re-establishment of the image of God" in the heart; it is the "change of heart," it is "the putting away the heart of stone," it is the "obedience of the heart;" it is "the purification of the heart;" it is "the love of God in the heart."

It might, perhaps, seem superfluous to remind men in a Christian church of principles so clear and apparently so generally admitted; but in the name of all that is most precious to you, in the name of your soul and its eternity, examine yourselves attentively, and do not imitate those who, being deceived by the vain appearances of a merely external reform, persuade themselves that *they* have no need of repentance. Guard against the delusion now so prevalent

amongst professors, that because the baptismal water has been poured on them, because they attend religious assemblies, because they say prayers and give alms, because their conduct is becoming, perhaps, even austere in the eyes of men, they are the children of God ; although in secret their heart is still far from God ; although the love of the world is occupying the place which the love of God should occupy ; although the maxims of the world, the approbation of the world, the favours of the world, are still the rule of their life, and their first aim and sweetest reward.

Examine yourselves. Think that these terrible words, " Except ye repent, ye shall perish," came from the mouth of Him who had left the glory of heaven to come down into the abyss of our misery, to " deliver us from the wrath to come," by the wonders of a mercy higher than the heavens, and deeper than the depths of hell. Think that all the studies, all the cares, all the glories of this transitory life are but pompous puerilities in comparison with the question on which eternity depends. Am I converted ? Shall I be found on the right hand of the Judge ? Am I in Christ ?

Give therefore an attentive ear to the questions which I am going to ask you.

Is it your first ambition, your most fervent desire on earth, to have the image of God re-established in your soul,—to know him and to love him daily more and more ? Is this the cause of your fears and your joys, your desires and your sorrows ? Has sin become more and more hateful to you, and is the inclination which leads you to it your heaviest burden, your most painful infirmity ?

Do ye love your God ? and, as a true son, do ye love the children of your heavenly Father ? Do ye possess " that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, which visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeps us unspotted from the world ? " Do ye love those who do not love

you? or, like the Pharisees, “do ye only love them which love you?” Is the coming of Christ’s kingdom the frequent object of your desires, your prayers and your thoughts? Do ye see with emotion the wrong which irreligious men do to the Church of Christ; and if they hold an eminent rank in the world, do ye avoid with respect to them that familiarity which you would take good care to show towards the slanderers of your country, your family, or your person?

Do ye love your God? and “does your mouth speak out of the abundance of your heart?” The man who is passionately fond of politics speaks constantly of the events of the day, the worldly woman of her pleasures, the merchant of his calculations. The well-bred son, far from the paternal roof—the wife or a tender mother, separated from those whom they love—always introduce into their conversations the dear one, the sweet thought of whom, at every instant, moves and fills their heart. Well! are your dearest and most habitual subjects of conversation those of a child of God, those of a bride of Jesus Christ? Do ye, for that purpose, seek out the friends of your heavenly Father? Are ye astonished to see so many persons who would feel much offended if they were refused the name of *Christians*, who can yet pass whole days, months, years, with their parents, their children, their brothers their sisters, and all they love best on earth, without ever speaking to them of the Saviour, of salvation, of the treasures in heaven, or of invisible and eternal things? Are ye astonished, are ye afflicted, to see, on the one hand, with what eagerness and what new interest, so many persons can speak of common affairs, of sciences, or even of the most indifferent events of life; and, on the other hand, with what languor, and how rarely, do people converse of the Holy Bible, of the eternal future, of the incarnation of the Lord, of His return to heaven, of His promises, of His presence by His Spirit in the midst of His people, of His coming in His

glory, those "good tidings," which have been in every age, *for the true people of God, subjects of great joy.*

Do ye love your God? do ye love in God's manner your children, your parents, your friends, your servants? do ye love their souls? What is, with respect to them, the first object of your fears and your hopes, your griefs and your joys? Are ye more occupied and more anxious about their progress in the knowledge of Christ and holiness, than you are about their studies, or the favour of the world, or the advantages of the age?

Do ye love your God? a loving heart desires nothing so much as to approach the loved object. Is it a necessity for you? Is it a joy to speak with your God in prayer, to hear Him in His Word, to contemplate Him in His worship? Is it in heaven ye have put "your treasure and your heart?" Eternity, that ocean without boundaries, which formerly attracted you so little, does it now occupy chiefly your thoughts? When ye examine your most habitual feelings, your solitary thoughts, in those moments when you suffer them to wander at the pleasure of your dearest wishes, where do they lead you? to heaven or to the earth; towards the Creator or towards the creature? towards the fleeting joys of this life, or towards that "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away," which Jesus reserves for His people? Is the Word of your God your delight? Do ye listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd? Do ye prefer it to any other voice, to any other lecture; and, to quote an apostle, "Do ye desire, as new-born babes, the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby?" Do ye find in prayer, instead of the languor and the secret repugnance which formerly pursued you there, a true relief, a consolation, and a joy? And, lastly, has the Christian Sabbath, this beautiful day which the Lord has selected for His people, become for your soul a festival? "Do ye call the Sabbath a delight,

the holy of the Lord, and honourable?" Is it for you a day of reflection, of charity, of prayer, and of a holy joy? instead of being as formerly, before ye knew your Saviour, a day of constraint, dark and tedious; or, perhaps, a day of dissipation, possibly more devoted to the vanities of the world than the other six days of the week have been?

In short, beloved brethren, look at these various features, and ask yourselves whether ye *are converted*; whether ye serve God with the heart of a child, or with the constraint of a slave; whether ye possess that love, without which it is impossible to know the Lord Jesus, and without which your pretended faith would be "dead faith, a false faith, a body without a spirit." Oh! "return, return, and then ye will discern the difference which is between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." *But how does one become converted?* How is the heart changed? How can one be saved?

How does one become converted? It is long since, sighing over the seductions of my heart, and feeling the necessity of a change in my secret affections, I began to struggle against the inclinations which hurried me on; I began to work at my conversion. At each new partaking of the Lord's supper, I betook myself to prayers and serious thoughts; I renewed my resolutions, my exertions, and my promises; and yet I remained always the same, always languid, always afflicted by those evils which trouble my soul! I gave alms, but without pleasure and without charity; I read pious books, but out of duty and without comfort; I cried to the Lord, but without hope and without confidence. I spoke of my sins, but without true contrition; of the Saviour, but without joy; of the vanities of the world, but without disengaging my heart from them; and each day of my life I was obliged to renew to my God, in my evening prayer, the same promises and the same resolutions for the following day, with the same avowals and the

same sighs for the day which had just past. How can I then become converted? How can my heart be changed? How can I be saved?

Listen, serious souls—"souls that labour and are heavy laden," who bemoan your helplessness and mourn over your misery,—listen to the "Gospel," that is to say, to the "Good Tidings."

I will give you first the same answer which the Lord Himself gave to His disciples, when they asked Him the same question; "He beheld them," the Bible tells us, and He answered them, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Yea, "what is impossible with men, is possible with God." This is the good news, this is the gospel; *'Ye have a Saviour*; Jesus is come to seek and to save that which was lost; Jesus "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Jesus "is a Prince and a Saviour, exalted to give to His people repentance, and forgiveness of sins;" ye hear it: not only *the remission of sins, but also the conversion of the heart*. He merits it for us, He preaches it to us, He procures it for us. Not only He merits it for us by His blood, not only He preaches it to us by His word, but still more He procures it for us by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost renders efficacious in our hearts the exhortations of His Gospel.

Yes, Christians, ye have a Saviour!

Observe, therefore, how we preach *conversion*. We preach it to you as "the remission of sins IN JESUS CHRIST." We preach it to you according to "that word of the cross," which must be in every age "foolishness" to some, and a "stumbling-block" to others, but which "is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, unto salvation to every one that believeth."

We therefore do not preach it to you in the way of the moralists of our time. As for them, if you were to ask them how to reform one's affections, how to become converted,

how to have one's heart changed ; relying, as the Apostle tells us, "on philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and not after Christ," they would answer you : make exertions to become holy, and to stifle in your souls every bad desire ; make exertions to love God with all your heart, and to imitate St. Paul, Timothy, and all those noble souls who preceded you, without ever directing you to Christ, "without whom ye can do nothing," and who alone can make energetic those very efforts which are required of you.

Similar, in their blind confidence, to the foolish man who, because he has seen Jesus, at the doors of Bethany or of Jerusalem, stretching out His mighty hand and crying to Mary's brother, "Lazarus, come forth !" or to the lame man, "Arise and walk !" should have imagined himself able to imitate the wonders of the Lord, by imitating His gestures and His commands, crying to the dead buried in the graves of Bethany, or to the infirm lying under the porticos of Bethesda, "Ye dead come forth from your graves ! ye lame, arise and walk with a firm step ; imitate that Lazarus who leaves his grave ; imitate the efforts and the resolution of that lame man, and walk courageously !"

We too tell you to make exertions ; we too command the lame to arise and to follow Jesus ; we too cry out, "Imitate Paul, Timothy, St. Stephen, and all those noble souls whom the Lord has purchased for Himself !" —but, as the apostle did, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk ! *Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole : arise !*" We direct ye to Jesus, that "His strength may be made perfect in your weakness ;" and that "ye may be washed, justified, and sanctified in His name, and by the Spirit of our God." Jesus alone is able to pour life into a withered body, Jesus who upholds all things, and without whom "no man cometh unto the Father," who quickens the dead by His divine power as the Resurrection and the Life.

We too, with the apostles, preach repentance, but by adding, as they always did, "and believe the good tidings!" Indeed, as the branch can bear no fruit, "except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Christ." He is "the vine, ye are the branches;" he who dwelleth in Christ and in whom dwelleth the Spirit of Christ, bears much fruit; "for without Him ye can do nothing." We too, with the apostle, exhort you to endeavour to live holy, "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" but it is by praying, as he did, that God would "make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ." We too, with Ezekiel, proclaim "Make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" but it is by adding, as he did, on the part of the Lord, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of you, and will give you a heart of flesh: I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and do them."

Conversion, ye see, is then, in a certain signification, the work of man and the work of Christ. It is Lazarus himself, doubtless, and not another man, who comes forth from the grave at the calling of the Saviour; it is the sinner himself, doubtless, who rises from the grave of his sins at the calling of Jesus, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" "But it is God," as St. Paul tells us, "who, in His great mercy, when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of *yourselves*," he adds, "it is the gift of God; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Conversion is then a miracle! Yes, literally, every true conversion is *a miracle of the Holy Spirit*; and therefore con-

verted men are called "created by God, born of the Holy Ghost, born of God, children of God." And this miracle, which is renewed every day in the Church of Christ, differs from the supernatural cures and the resurrections which are reported to us in the Gospel, only in so far that these wonders were external and visible, while conversion is an internal and invisible wonder; and, besides, very often, it only takes place by a successive progress and in insensible degrees.

Christ is "the Prince and Saviour, exalted to give *repentance* to His people, and *forgiveness of sins*!"

Lord, Thou livest! Lord, Thou hast said in Thy word, Thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and, in this moment, where two or three are gathered in Thy name, Thou art present in the midst; and Thou art able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Thee!

Christians, ye have a Saviour, and it is in His name and by His authority that I entreat you to come to this mighty Saviour, whom ye do not see, but who calls you all to-day by my mouth, who stretches out His arms towards you, and who cries to each of you, "And thou! 'wilt thou not come to Me, that thou mightest have life?' " We are "ambassadors for Christ," and in His name we invite ye all to repent,—all, without exception. *Ye ought all to do so*,—we have shown this to you; but further, we declare that if ye *will* do so, *ye all can do so*.

Go then to Christ, "labouring and heavy-laden souls," who sigh after the conversion of your heart, go to Christ to have life; but go there without delay, without reserve, without distrust; I repeat it, without delay, this very day, sincerely and without reserve, freely and without doubt.

Go without delay. Do not longer defer from one day to another. Consider with what rapidity "the fashion of this world" is passing away, and those shades of joy, where "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful." Consider that ye

may leave this life not less unexpectedly than the Galilæans of the temple, or the eighteen of Siloa. Consider that even here, where the Gospel is faithfully preached to you, the sword of death may pierce you. Delay, therefore, no longer, and give the Lord thanks that there is still time.

Go there sincerely and without reserve, with the serious desire to obey His words and “not to grieve His Spirit.” Go there as being *unable to do anything by yourselves*; but also as “being able to do all things through Christ strengthening you.”

I ask you, “wilt thou” sincerely “be made whole?” “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” But thou must act also, if thou believest. As the lame man confided in the strength of Him who cried to him, “*Arise and walk!*” thou must from this very day follow thy Saviour, and say to thyself, “As long as I remain with crossed arms in my guilty languor, I have not truly believed His word.” The faith which does not act is not sincere; it is false; “it is dead;” it is not faith or believing, any more than a body without a soul is a man. If I truly believed His word, I should have arisen at the sound of that voice which cries to me, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!” If I truly believed His word I should have gone out to fight and I should have said, as David, as Jonathan, as Joshua, “I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me, this fight is the Lord’s, the Lord is with me, be therefore strong, my soul, and rush bravely into the battle!” Let us then go forward in the path of duty, in that career into which he calls us, “looking unto the Author and Finisher of our faith.” Let us go eagerly, as the ten lepers of the Gospel, in the way he has shown us from heaven, and let us be persuaded, as they were, that we shall find, by His grace, the healing which has been promised to us.

My God, from this very day I will do Thy will; from this

very day I will listen to Thee in Thy word, because it is by Thy Word that Thy Spirit acts upon my heart ; I will implore Thee in prayer, because I can do nothing without Thee ; but I will also follow Thee into the battle, because Thou commandest me to fight. My God, what dost Thou wish me to do ? In what must I, from this very day, reform my habits, my public life, my domestic life, my secret life ? My God, what commerce must I break off, what danger must I flee, what thoughts must I repulse, what evil must I make amends for, what reconciliation, what avowals, what sacrifice have I to make ? “If I have wronged any man,” from this very day “I restore him fourfold.” My God, what dost thou wish me to do ?

But also, dear brethren, above all things, go to Christ freely and without distrust. Ah ! here I should like you well to understand His word ; here I should like my weak voice to become piercing like the trumpet of the last judgment ; here I should like it to penetrate like a two-edged sword into your joints and marrow. He calls you ; He invites you ; He has merited everything for you ; He has accomplished all things ; why then should you still hesitate, why should you not go freely and without distrust ?

I know your scruples and your fears ; and what sincere soul, who has sought his Saviour, has not experienced them like you ? Ye wait till ye find in your life encouraging recollections, and in your hearts dispositions to justify a confidence which, without that, ye would consider rash and bold. Ye say, I believe in the invitations of the Gospel, and I believe in the power of my Saviour ; but I should like to find within myself more love, more holy desires, more purity ! I feel myself still so little worthy to believe that these magnificent promises of mercy, of pardon, of assistance, of glory can be fulfilled for me !

Oh ! lay aside those scruples of a proud humility. When

would ye go to Christ, if ye waited till ye were worthy of Him? When would ye go to the great Physician of souls, to the Redeemer of sinners, to the Saviour of those who are lost, if ye waited till ye were neither sick, nor sinful, nor lost? Is it for the just that "He has given His soul an offering and a sacrifice?" Is it for the lawful possessors of heaven that He has descended into the abyss, and that He has suffered what no finite being would ever suffer?

Doubtless it is declared to us that "we must be born again to see the kingdom of God;" doubtless, "except we repent," before our last hour, "we shall perish;" doubtless, "without holiness" of the heart "no man shall see the Lord:" but *here, below*, while "the Gospel is preached to the poor, healing to the broken-hearted, deliverance to the captives," to go to Christ, we must only feel our sin and misery and sincerely wish to be saved. We must go to Him as the publican, "God, be merciful to me *the* sinner!" to "go down," like him, "justified to his house." We must go to Christ, like Peter on the lake of Galilee, looking, not to our natural heaviness, nor to the depth of the waters, nor to the violence of the winds, but to Jesus, who stretches out His arms towards us and cries, "Come, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" We must only throw ourselves at His feet, as the penitent woman, to hear those sweet, those enrapturing words, "Go, my child, go in peace, thy faith has saved thee!"

Go then to Him, as ye are, freely and without distrust, remembering that He calls *all those* "who labour and are heavy-laden;" remembering that what *He commands you in His Word*, He has *deserved for you by His blood*, and will give you by His spirit. He Himself says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Go then to Him, exclaiming with David, from the bottom of your heart, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord! if thou shouldest mark iniqui-

ties, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared!" I come, therefore, to Thee, O my God, as wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, without any other offering than the avowal of my unworthiness, without any other right to Thy compassions, than my misery and Thy promises. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!"

If ye do these things, if ye thus draw near to the Saviour, I assure ye on the word of "God that cannot lie," ye shall find peace, your prayers shall be answered, ye shall be converted and saved.

Believe the word of your God; believe the faithful of every age and of every place. In no other way was the murderer, Saul, of Tarsus, the impure Mary, the unjust Zacchæus, the thief on the cross, converted; in no other way have any been converted and saved. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," says St. Paul. And again, "howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

Then the Lord will accomplish for you *His two promises*, the remission of your sins, and the conversion of your heart. Then the sight of the Lord Jesus, your Saviour, your friend, your elder brother, dying in your place amid torments which caused nature to quake, but now exalted above all heaven, looking from the height of His glory with an inexpressible tenderness, praying for you and calling you to Him; that view revealed to your soul by the Spirit of God will penetrate you with holy joy, filial repentance, fervent gratitude, and loving confidence. On the enormity of sin, the holiness, justice, and mercy of God it will give you feelings and thoughts,

in comparison with which the most eloquent speeches of human wisdom, on vice and virtue, will appear to you as but "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal;" then you "will look upon Him whom you have pierced, and will mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son," knowing that "many sins are forgiven you," like the penitent woman at Bethany you will love much. As the return of the sun, after a long winter, melts the ice which held the earth captive in the bonds of barrenness and death, so your soul, as soon as you have seen *the Sun of Righteousness* "arise with healing in His wings," will feel penetrated with the light of faith, with vital warmth, with peace, and joy. The spring-time of a new life will commence to make you young again and to renew you to the glory of God. Then, like your Saviour, you will become every day more "meek and lowly in heart," you will "put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy conversation;" you will "put off the old man with his deeds;" you will "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, meekness, long-suffering; and *the peace of God* will rule in your hearts."

Oh! the good tidings! how sweet to the heart of a sinner who knows his disease, and who seeks peace! O my soul quaff these living and celestial waters which refresh unto life eternal!

Ah, poor sinners that we are, on the verge of eternity, "to whom shall we go?" Has not Christ alone "the words of eternal life?" Let us, therefore, no longer refuse to go to Him. There is much joy and happiness in devoting one's self to Christ, much sweetness even in the midst of tears, much ease at the foot of His cross from the burden of sin, much peace in forsaking all to follow him.

Oh! Saviour, I have preached on Thy part, "Repent or ye shall perish; awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." I have "planted and watered," it is Thou alone that "givest the increase." It is

Thou alone "that raisest the dead." O Lord, our God, we avow ourselves, before Thy holy majesty, as guilty sinners who deserve condemnation and death; but we humbly have recourse to Thy grace, we beseech Thee, for Thy Son's sake, to relieve our misery, to pardon our transgressions, and to increase in us, from day to day, the graces of Thy Holy Spirit. May we renounce sin from the bottom of our hearts, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness acceptable to Thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.





THE SAYING OF CAIN.

By the Rev. EUG. BERSIER, *Paris.*

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"—GEN. iv., 9.

YOU have just heard, my brethren, the words of the first frâtricide. What a contrast between the mournful scene from which I have drawn them, and the account of creation which almost immediately precedes it! Creation is the plan of God. There, all is peace, harmony, and light. The human family one would think, is about to increase, and completely develop itself, by remaining united in unalterable love. Alas! I turn over that bright page, and it is to hear these words,—*Am I my brother's keeper?* uttered close by the bleeding body of Abel.

Since then, this saying of Cain has been repeated at every period, and in all places on the earth. We are in a position to say that where the Gospel has not been known, it has become as it were the motto of human nature. We search in vain in ancient societies for the link which ought to unite men. Every nation is penned up within its own territory, and its own religion. Even its deity is confined within its boundaries. Strangers are barbarians. The hope of a religious union, of a brotherhood of souls is so remote from the ideas of antiquity, that the philosopher Celsus, the famous opponent of Christianity, wrote thus: "It must be nothing short of madness to

believe that Greeks and Barbarians, Asia, Europe, and Libya, can ever be reunited in the bond of common religion." And what Celsus said with so much confidence, all think, whether Romans, Greeks, or even Jews. No one rises above that heightened selfishness. Every nation seems to say: Am I the keeper of others? And Rome, by conquering the world, united men only in a oneness of slavery and degradation.

Even among the various classes of the same people there is the same indifference, the same distance. Who, in antiquity, is concerned, for example, about the poor, the slave, or the destitute?

The poor man! Would you know what antiquity thought of him? Plato, that noble and beautiful genius, who has often been called a forerunner of Jesus Christ, coldly asks in his book on the Republic, if when the poor man is ill, it is our duty to help him, and he comes to the conclusion that it is not, because, says he, he is not worth the trouble. The slave! Never was there a heathen philosopher surprised at his lot. The orphan, the sick, the destitute! In all antiquity, as is still the case to-day in China, Japan, the Indies, and all places where the cross has not been planted, there is not a hospital, not an orphan asylum, not a refuge for old age or poverty. Do I then go too far when I affirm that, previous to Christianity, and apart from its influence, man has taken for his motto the saying of the fratricide, and has always answered the groans of the slave and the poor, by asking through the lips of his philosophers, his legislators, and his priests: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

So would the world have gone on to the end, plunged deeper and deeper in selfishness, if Jesus Christ had not come. Certainly, when entering upon the dark path of His humiliation, at the end of which rose the cross of Calvary, the Son of God might have said to His Father: "Am I the keeper of that depraved and rebellious race which has forgotten and

outraged Thee?" He might have said it, and remained in the glory and light which surrounded Him from the commencement. What He said, you know. You have heard it at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, in Gethsemane, at Golgotha. You have seen Him, the King of kings, taking up with our mortal flesh all the humiliation of poverty; you have seen Him loading Himself with our sorrows and sufferings; you have seen Him, O mystery of love! so identifying Himself with guilty men, that He took upon Him the weight of their crimes, all the horror of their condemnation. On the cross you have heard these extraordinary words, "My God! my God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Yes; He, the holy and the just One, felt the consequences of our rebellion. Therefore, at the sight of the cross the sinner's heart has trembled. On that cross guilty man has discovered his substitute. It is for us that the blood of the Crucified flows. It is "the blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than the blood of Abel." The blood of Abel reminds us of the saying of the fratricide: "Am I my brother's keeper?" The blood of Jesus Christ is that of the Chief Shepherd, dying not merely for His friends, but for His enemies.

My brethren, we call ourselves Christians. That is, we would be changed into the image of Jesus Christ; what He was, that we desire to be. At the foot of His cross we learn to hate selfishness; we learn to live no longer for ourselves, but, as members of one body, in our measure to care for our brethren. But who are our brethren? Ask Jesus Christ. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Yes, all men! His arms, which were extended on the cross of Calvary, would embrace the whole human family, not only the children of Abraham, but all the children of Adam. Look, then, for a soul which Jesus Christ rejects; a soul for whom His blood has not flowed. Your brethren! They are everywhere. They are those that love you; they

are also your enemies. They are those who communicate with you ; but they are also those who refuse you a place at their side in the Church and in Heaven. Has God given you property ? Your brother is that poor man. Are you poor ? He is that rich man towards whom you feel more envy than love. Has your mind been educated ? Your brother is that ignorant, narrow-minded creature with whom you have scarcely a common language or point of higher contact. Are you virtuous ? Your brother is that fallen creature that drags about in your streets the sad spectacle of his misery, his degradation, his vileness itself. Our brethren ! They are the publicans ; they are those very ones whom society puts under its ban. And, beyond the limits of our civilization and of our Church, our brethren are those poor blacks to whom some so-called Christians still deny the title and character of men ; they are the heathen, whose habits we loathe ; they are the savages of Australia, in reference to whom some of the most intelligent sceptics have lately asked with a sigh, "Is it worth while that a Papuan should have an immortal soul ?" Our brethren, they are everywhere ! When we go through the world proclaiming Divine mercy, and inviting to the Father's house lost sinners, we tell them all, as did the messengers in the parable, "Come, for there is still room." From under the whole heaven we call them to the banquet of God's love, whether poor or rich, learned or ignorant, virtuous or vicious ; and we will continue to call them till the day when, from the most remote extremities of the darkest and most desert region, the last savage shall come and take his seat there in his turn.

Such, my brethren, is the idea which Christianity gives us of the human family. To-day thinkers, and even infidels, take hold of it and make it a title of honour. We have a philosophy which bears the pretentious name of humanitarian, as if it had been the first to take care of the human family,

But let us not deceive ourselves in this matter; that idea is Christian, it was born at the foot of the cross. Man has understood that he formed but one family only since the day when the Chief Shepherd died to gather together his scattered members.

We have, therefore, to care for our brethren; their interests are our interests. Such is the general truth of which I have just reminded you. But that general truth immediately presents itself to us under two general aspects, which will occupy us in turn. Man has two natures,—he has a body and a soul. He breathes in his body, he breathes in his soul. We have therefore, my brethren, a double mission. We are called at once to relieve temporal sufferings and to save souls. In presence of that double mission we have all, perhaps, replied: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” This is the sentiment which I have now to combat. My prayer is that, with God’s help, I may be successful.

These two kinds of sufferings which I have mentioned Jesus Christ met with. Let us see what was His attitude with regard to them.

First, the sufferings of the body. Jesus Christ met with them under their two ordinary forms—sickness and poverty. What He did for them the Gospels tell us. We see Him at all times surrounded by the poor and the sick. These, we are told, were the society of His choice. It was for them that He wrought His most magnificent works. Hence, you see how these unhappy ones ran to Him. Would you see where Jesus Christ is, you have only to observe where the poor go. Before He appears their cries call Him. They especially welcome Him, and cry to Him, “Hosannah.” Alas! I know quite well all that there was in that carnal-minded and selfish eagerness. I know that later on they will fly from Him, and, perhaps, curse Him. But it is for this very

reason that His love appears to me more wonderful, more sublime, more Divine. How He raises up those poor ones! With what tender solicitude He is concerned about them! It is from among them that He chooses His disciples. He who never casts a look toward the splendours of earth—He who in the whole of His Gospel bestows no praise upon the Tiberiuses or the Cæsars—He bequeaths to immortality the names of Lazarus and Mary Magdalene, showing thus how He acted towards the poor, the low, and the most degraded. He was born among them, He lived with them, He died with them; and in such a manner that at whatever page you open the Gospel you find Jesus and the poor inseparably united. And what is still more marvellous—and of which I cannot think without my heart being deeply moved—it is not only during the days of His flesh, it is even to the end of the world that Jesus Christ is united with the poor and the sick. Since He left the earth He has chosen a representative of Himself here below—a representative till the end of the world. Look at that sublime scene which Matthew has preserved for us.

The world which appears eternal has finished its course; the din of earth has ceased, and here are all the generations of men appearing before Him, as sheep before their shepherd. And what will be the words which the King will address at that solemn hour to those whom He will acknowledge as the beloved of His Father, and admit to His glory. He might have said to them, “I was your Maker, and ye served Me; I was your King, and ye proclaimed My kingdom; I was your God, and ye worshipped Me.” No. On that day He will say nothing of His kingdom, nor of His glory, nor even of His Divinity. He will say, “I was poor.” Behold, then, the highest title of the Son of God, the King of kings: “I was poor, I was sick, and ye visited Me, and ye gave Me meat, and ye clothed Me.” My brethren, do you understand what there is in these words? As for me, if I possessed only

that fragment of the Gospel, I should with adoration recognise in it the mark of that God whose name is Love, I would say, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

You see, therefore, what has been the result of that sublime instruction. The faithful Church has ever recognised in the poor the representative of Jesus Christ. Hence, in the first days, that marvellous spectacle of the Church at Jerusalem, where all social distinctions were effaced. The same love of the poor reappears in the Epistles; when the great Apostle Paul sets out on his missionary journeys, and asks for the last counsels, the last charge, of his brethren in the apostolate: "They would only that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." Indeed his first thoughts were always about the poor, in the midst of his journeys, his perils, his heroic labours.

In all places where the Gospel has been faithfully preached the same prepossession has existed. It was at Ephesus, in the church where St. John wrote those sublime words, "God is love," that the first hospital was founded; shortly after, it was followed by the first orphan asylum. Slaves received the name of brethren, given them for the first time. In fine, notwithstanding the veils with which Christianity is covered, and under which men have endeavoured to choke her voice, she everywhere reminds man that the sufferings of his brethren are his sufferings, that no one has a right to close his heart to them.

You have heard of that oration in which the most eloquent of orators startled his hearers by relating to them the sufferings of one of their countrymen. He pictured him beaten with rods by the order of an unjust judge, and crying out in his anguish: "Civis Romanus sum!" (I am a Roman citizen!) That cry alone, uttered by Cicero in the market-place at Rome, would have been enough to gain his cause; for these words "Civis Romanus sum!" had throughout the whole

world an extraordinary power: they surrounded him who uttered them with the inviolable majesty of the sovereign city, they covered him with a protection which nothing equalled. There is in that feeling of civil joint-responsibility something grand to move us; yet, to look at it closely, that feeling rested only in the selfish pride of the Roman people, and Cicero would have left his hearers unmoved if he had spoken to them of the punishment of a Greek, a barbarian, or a slave. But whilst thoroughly loving our country, can we shut up our hearts within its narrow limits when we are witnesses of an injustice? Is it the citizen, or is it not rather the man within us, that it strikes to the depths of the soul? Now, whence comes, if not from Christianity, that power of sympathy which nothing can arrest? Why do you see to-day in the bosom of Christian nations—and, bear in mind, there only—that ardent and continually-increasing interest in favour of the suffering classes? Why do all the problems connected with it force themselves upon us without our being able to put them aside? Why does the modern world, in this respect, act after a fashion quite in opposition to antiquity? Why are the words of the fratricide, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” so energetically spurned in social as well as in political questions? Why, in fine, do we see developed more and more that feeling of fellow-responsibility which prevents anything connected with humanity from being really foreign to us?

It is because of the Gospel, which is still, thank God, the salt of the earth. I know you will tell me this is not always the case; you will show me iniquities practised under the shadow of Christianity; heathens corrupted, degraded by Christian nations; slaves whose chains are riveted in the name of Jesus Christ. But does there not arise from the very impression which these deeds produce the strongest argument in favour of Christianity? Whence comes the immediate, irresistible indignation which seizes even the most

unbelieving in presence of these deeds? Would they be so indignant if these crimes were committed under the shadow of another religion? No, what rouses this indignation is the painful fact that it is Christians who commit them. Men feel that the Gospel is opposed to such things, that it is slandered, that the lie is given to it, when such things are perpetrated in its name. Well, that indignation is my answer; it testifies that the Gospel is not guilty of the evil deeds committed under its shadow; it testifies that it is still the best refuge for all that suffer; it testifies, in fine, that He has not deceived men who said to all of them, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

When we see iniquities committed in countries where the Gospel is preached, infidelity triumphs over it, and cries out: "Of what use then is your religion?" But in presence of these deeds, we must on the contrary quote a great saying of Franklin's, and observe, "If men are so bad even with religion, what would they be without it?" Yes, what would they be without that Gospel with which they find fault? What was the world before Jesus Christ? What would it be without Jesus Christ? Should you try to blot out that Sun of souls whose light troubles you, and, to suppose an impossibility, succeed in the attempt, in the appalling darkness that would cover the world you would discover, but too late, what the splendour of the luminary was which you have extinguished.

Such is the work Christianity has done for the sufferings of the body; but this, we have seen, is but a part of her mission. Superior to the body there is the soul. Now the soul is the immortal part of man. If it is our duty to sympathise with the temporal interests of our fellows, what will it be when the question is about their souls, the eternal part of them? I spoke a moment ago of the dignity which the

Gospel has given to the poor, to the destitute. But on what does that dignity especially depend? On the belief that in the poorest, in the most degraded, there is an immortal soul, which is called to the happiness of heaven, and which Jesus Christ designed to save by His blood. It is because I believe in that soul, that the lowest slave or savage has a right to my respect. As the sculptor, gazing upon the shapeless block, sees beforehand the figure full of grace or majesty which his chisel will develop out of it; as the smelter, looking upon the ore, loaded with dross, sees already the pure gold glitter, so in a creature as rude, as defiled as you can imagine, I see and I greet in advance, a regenerated soul, capable of reproducing the image of God. It is a soul in ruins, I know; but they are the ruins of a sanctuary which God can soon raise up again, and fill with His ineffable presence.

Deprive me of that belief, and man, as far as I am concerned, is no more than a being that appears for a moment in the world, a figure in the immense addition, a wheel in the immense machinery. If I believe only in matter, it is better to abandon him to his sad and fatal destiny. It is better to say with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

But if I have myself comprehended what my soul is, if I have felt that in it is my dignity, my grandeur, and my true life, then it is that life which I would awaken in others. It is on this side that I should like to know and love my brethren, and I feel that by that means I know and love them for eternity.

We are then concerned about the soul, because we know what it is worth. I add we are doubly concerned because we know into what a state sin has plunged it.

We may speak of the sufferings of the body, but is the soul less injured? Does not the soul suffer from an evil much deeper and much more terrible, because it may be eternal? Look about you, what a number of souls that know not God,

that deny Him, that blaspheme Him ! How many souls that go on pursuing their course in what is only dissipation and vanity ! How many persist in separating themselves more and more from communion with God, and, to say all in a word, how many ruin themselves ! All that, my brethren, you know. Well ! it is our duty to save these souls.

To save souls ! It was for this purpose that Jesus came upon earth. He saw these lost souls. He measured by the gaze of His love the depth of the abyss in which they were plunged, and, to draw them out of it, He gave everything—His heart, His blood, His life, even the love of His Father, of which He momentarily lost the sense in Golgotha. Therefore, the love of souls has gushed forth at the foot of His cross. See St. Paul, when he is seized with that love, all else falls into the shade, and becomes dim in his life. His heart has found its highest passion. He must set out, he must journey, he must go forward, he must carry salvation everywhere. One church is founded ; he leaves it to found another. After Antioch there is Galatia, then Ephesus, then Macedonia, then Greece, then Rome ; soon there will be Spain. Even in the night visions surround him. Voices cry to him, “ Come over and help us ; ” and when his frailty attempts to whisper, “ Am I my brother’s keeper ? ” the voice of his conscience replies with an inexorable strength, “ Woe art thou if thou preach not the Gospel ! ”

The love of souls ! Wherever the Church has lived the life of her Master, she has felt it, she has been penetrated by it ; and there you have the reason why, in the modern world, there is a something unknown to antiquity, a fact peculiar to Christianity alone. Missions, missions ! Ah ! I know to what attacks they have been exposed. I know how much infidelity has laughed at their apparent want of success. And yet, do you know anything grander than that mysterious link which causes us to feel an interest in what takes place at our Anti-

podes, to pray for souls separated from us by thousands of leagues? Your children are gathered together; these children are told of the Esquimaux of Greenland, of the negroes of the Gold Coast: their young hearts are moved, are softened, they feel for these unknown heathen an irresistible pity. For them they make sacrifices, and the savings of a poor apprentice serve to procure for a savage of Africa food for the heart and mind. Where is the philosophy, where is the most elevated philanthropy which has ever produced anything like it! Missions! Christianity alone could have given them birth. They may be railed at, but have you ever reflected on what our civilized Europe would have given to the heathen world, if the missionaries had not been there? Alas! what has it brought to them? Arms to destroy one another, brandy or opium to brutalize and deprave themselves. But, behold! there have been found, and there are still found, men who have in their hearts a divine love. They come to these heathens; they tell them that there is in heaven a Father who loves them, and on earth brethren who would save them; they relate to them the wondrous history of the incarnate Son of God; they plant in their hearts the cross of Jesus Christ. They are persecuted, they are railed at, they are killed, but others follow them, and soon on the land, watered with their blood, we see flourish those churches of New Zealand, of Labrador, of Madagascar, where at this very hour thousands of souls outstrip us in the kingdom of God by their love and by their zeal; and it is thus that the thread of the Gospel, borne at first by twelve fishermen of Galilee, sees its two extremities joined together, having already wrapped itself round the earth.

But the souls to be saved are not those on distant shores only. Take care that you be not carried away merely by the imagination of those grand enterprises, the heroism of which entices all generous spirits. The souls to be saved are those also with whom you are entrusted, those who are quite

near to you, in your family, in your dwelling, at your fire-side, in your streets, and in your workshops. It is for these first of all that we must work, it is to them that we must carry life and light. Ah! what would it avail us, I pray you, to compass sea and land to make converts, if we leave at our gate a Lazarus covered with sores, or a soul deprived of the truth that saves? Let us have love sufficient to embrace the world, but let the first objects of that love be those whom God has given us!

Behold, my brethren, our mission. There it is in its whole extent. To limit it ever so little would be on my part unfaithfulness to the truth. Well! how do we fulfil that mission?

First, what is to be said of those who do not fulfil it? Alas!—we must admit it—there is a religion which is connected with coldness of heart. There is an orthodoxy of the head, which is the most fatal of heresies, for it teaches the world that the Gospel has no efficacy, and that the blood of Jesus Christ has watered the earth only to leave there the dryness of the desert. There are people who believe themselves saved who have never loved. To be saved is, in their case, to have settled matters once for all with God. They receive the instruction, broad or narrow, easy or severe, which prevails in the Church to which they belong, and having thus resolved the weighty questions of eternity, they go away with a heart light, dry, worldly, even in the midst of a world which suffers and perishes far from God.

My brethren, is that the faith which saves? No, it is a deplorable counterfeit of it. The faith which saves has been depicted by Jesus Christ in a magnificent saying:—"He that believeth in Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

I do not believe in a religion which leaves the heart dry, in a religion which does not produce energy, devotedness,

and sacrifice. The faith which saves is the faith which leads us to save others. And now, as to the mission of elevating and saving men, once more I ask, How do we accomplish it?

“*Am I my brother's keeper?*” We would not dare to say it, but do we not dare to think it? Does not that saying best express the feeling that we experience when we look in the face the work which God has entrusted us with? And, if selfishness has never drawn from us those words, have we never uttered them in times of discouragement?

Ah! it is in presence of such a duty that we must call to mind with humiliation the words of the Master, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The spirit is willing, and, indeed, what kind of person is he among us who has not been seized with emotion in presence of that magnificent mission which God has entrusted to us? What kind of person is he who has not felt that life so understood is real life? But at whatever time, even to-morrow, when you will again find yourselves in presence of that mission, and it will be necessary not only to admire, but to act, the flesh will be weak. Let us also say it, the task is grand, and even that grandeur affrights us. There are hours when the thought of all that is to be done pursues us, besets us, and paralyses us. There are hours when we hear rise in our soul a kind of vague and dull noise, which goes on increasing; it is the sound of the sorrows of earth, the groaning of the oppressed, the bitter wail of the famished, the cry of rebellion, or the perverse mirth of souls which are perishing. All these voices are united, they rise like the billows of a furious sea which the stormy wind raises, and dash on us their helpless cries. Then, bending ourselves over these unfathomable depths, we say, “Of what use is it to cast my feeble words into that tumult, of what use is it to crumble my bread on the surface of that immense ocean?”

You who are acquainted with these temptations, you who know the power which attacks, the discouragement which steals into our hearts, listen ; I have good words for you,—I say to you all : “ Look to Jesus Christ.” You sink under the weight of your task, because you have to save some souls, to assuage some griefs. He who had to save the world how did He persevere to the end !

It was because He accepted from day to day the will of His Father ; it was because His work of elevating and saving men was seen by Him in its whole extent, in each of the duties which each hour placed before Him. His work was to save the world. Yes ; but it pleases God that that gigantic work should commence in an humble district of Galilee, and that the first fruits of that immense harvest should be some poor fishermen. Well, in that little and humble task, which a sage of this world or a great preacher of our days would, perhaps, have despised, Jesus is faithful, faithful in detail, faithful towards every soul that God intrusts to Him, towards every sorrow which God sends upon him. Oh, wonderful example ! who would have said that it was there, amongst that obscure people, in that lost country, that the salvation of the world was being prepared ? Yet it was thus that Jesus understood His task. He whose heart was vast enough to sympathise with all our griefs, He who felt love enough to save the whole human family, He begins at first to heal, to save those who surround Him. None of them appears to Him beneath His notice ; it is with reference to the least of the earth that He will have His most magnificent teachings understood.

Let us go then to the school of Christ. Let us begin to act as He did, in the humble sphere where God has placed us. Let us accept each work which He sends us, let us console each grief which He puts directly in our way, and in that faithful and persevering work discouragement will not seize

upon us. One will labour to gather together some souls to hear that word which raises up and comforts ; another will pursue in a school instruction rendered powerful by prayer ; another will seek to procure for poor labourers a gain which will give them life ; another will follow the path of orphans adopted in the name of Christ. The work is infinitely diverse, but even its grandeur does not discourage him who follows it in the spirit of Christ, for he knows that not one of his efforts is in vain, that not even a cup of cold water is lost.

But, my brethren, I hear your last objection. You tell me, yes, we should be ready to work in the most humble sphere, to work courageously, but on one condition ; that is, that our labour bear at least some fruit. But this work has been barren, we have seen our efforts shattered against an obstinate indifference, against a heart-rending ingratitude. Where will be placed the sad history of those vain attempts, those humiliating failures, those painful discouragements which every Christian knows and could without doubt relate in his turn.

To all these objections, to all these motives to lose courage, let me present the same answer which you have just heard, let me again repeat to you : “Look to Jesus Christ.”

Was Jesus Christ always successful while He was on earth ? Did He see His kindnesses answered by gratitude, hearts touched by His words and converted by His miracles ? Did He see the multitudes whom He had nourished undertake His defence in the hour of danger, and convey to Him any sympathy ? Did He see the apostles whom He had instructed, on whom He had lavished the most tender care, remain faithful to Him ? Alas ! it must indeed be said, there never was a ministry less productive of apparent results than that of Jesus Christ. What a contrast between the love displayed and the

fruits obtained ! Three years of sublime instruction ; three years of a holy and spotless life ; three years of an incomparable love ; a ministry in fine of such a character that all others grow pale before it, as the most brilliant stars grow pale before the sun, and all that to end in drawing together at the foot of the cross two or three women, who weep and tremble in face of a multitude who rail at Him, and curse Him, and clamour for His blood !

Well ! thou discouraged one, and ye souls that groan over your work, what would you have thought at the foot of the cross ? Would you have supposed that cross to be His throne, and that the day was about to come when all the nations of the earth would go and worship at His feet ?

Behold the plan of God ! See that holy foolishness of which the Apostle speaks. To conquer in unsuccess, to conquer in humiliation, to conquer by giving His life ; there was the victory of Jesus Christ.

That will, perhaps, be yours. To you no more than to Him will it be given to see the fruits of your activity. You also will sow in tears, you also will call to you souls who will not answer, you also will multiply the bread of your charity to poor ingrates, you also will see your best intentions misconstrued, your love slighted. Well, in those sombre hours when the tempter would like to glide into your soul to draw from you the words of the fratricide, "Am I my brother's keeper?" think of Jesus Christ, and fixing your eye on His unalterable love, on His extraordinary patience, on His pity stronger than all the hatreds with which He is loaded, you will find strength still to love, still to act, still to bless, till the day when the Lord will say to you : "Enter into my rest."

No, my brethren, let us not tire. And, in addition to all this, listen. If you, Christians, forget your poor, suffering, and sinful brethren, if you cease to work to raise them up and

save them, remember there is in the world a vast and mysterious power propagating darkness, vice, and iniquity—a power which slackens not for one moment. He whom Scripture calls the Prince of this world, he also has his army and his missionaries. They go forward without ceasing, they call to souls; everywhere is their voice heard, they speak and they write, seeking disciples and imitators. “Follow me,” is said without scruple, to a young man poor but pure, by the man of pleasure or the ambitious one who passes before him, proud of his property and the homage which surrounds him; and that young man follows him, all dazzled by the fascinations of wealth and ease, and he sells to the world a soul till yesterday noble and generous. “Follow me,” is said to a young workwoman by the lewd female who passes before her, rioting in the noisy mirth and luxury of a day. The unhappy young woman follows her into that life of stupefaction and of infamy; she sacrifices to it, alas! her soul, consecrated perhaps to God by the tears of a mother—her soul for which so many silent prayers had risen to heaven. “Follow me,” is said to the rising generation by the infidel, who persists in sowing by his words and by his pen his doctrines of unbelief and death. “Follow me: for to me is the homage of élite minds offered, to me belongs intellectual glory the most exquisite of all.” Alas! how many follow him! How many go off, amid the plaudits of the age, to proclaim with a maddened enthusiasm, to all hearts embittered by misery and suffering, that heaven is empty, that there is no Father there to receive our prayers, and that nothingness is the end of all. “Follow me,” that is their cry while they go on travelling down the broad way. It is not enough for them to ruin their own souls, they must also ruin the souls of others.

And yet Thou didst wait upon them, O Jesus Christ! For hem also Thou hast suffered, and from the height of Thy

cross Thou didst say to them—to all—"Come unto Me." But have they seen that cross, my brethren? Do they know Him whom we call the Saviour? What have we done to proclaim Him? What have we done to win these souls to Him? Lord, speak to our consciences, save us from our coldness, from our unconcern, from our love of comfort; inflame our hearts, inspire us to make great sacrifices, and give us to show the world that Thy work continues and that the highest victory is guaranteed to the faith which works by love.



THE CHURCH UNDER THE CROSS.

By Dr. C. E. LUTHARDT, *Professor of Theology, Leipsig.*

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you ; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your’s also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin : but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.”—JOHN XV., 18—25.

BELOVED, we are come to the time of year which is usually devoted by Christians to meditation on the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour. There are three ways of considering His sufferings. First, by reflecting on their necessity. “Ought not the Christ to suffer these things?” “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.” This is the old way. Out of death comes life, out of night and darkness come day and light, out of the past comes the present, out of the descent arises the ascent, out of the depth the height. The corn of wheat must be cast into the

ground and die, if it is to bring forth much fruit. History shows that mankind has taken no onward step that has not been purchased by sacrifice. This is the great law ; and as Jesus Christ is the turning point and centre of history, in whom it becomes new, His offering must be the perfection of all offerings. Hence His sufferings were divinely predicted, and as predicted were fulfilled. In no other way could He have entered into His glory ; but to consider the Lord's sufferings in their unavoidableness is to view them in the outer court.

The second way of considering them is to stand in the holy place. In the outward court the abode of God discloses itself to the world, but in the holy place it closes itself against the world, and is removed from it and stands over against it. The sufferings of Jesus Christ reveal the old opposition, the ancient irreconcilable enmity of sin to holiness, of hatred to love, of the seed of the serpent to the seed of the woman, of Satan to God and His anointed. From the beginning of history down there is this opposition, this contest, this enmity, this war. Jesus is the end of the old period. All the malignity of the world and of its prince against God poured itself like billows upon His head, to drown Him in suffering ; and all the hatred of falsehood against truth discharged itself upon Him, to annihilate Him before man in the disgraceful death of a transgressor. The utmost that this enmity was able to do, it did towards Him, till it exhausted itself, and its power came to an end, conquered by the silent obedience of His unconquerable love. This is the second consideration of the sufferings of Christ, a consideration which stands in the holy place.

The third is that which sees, behind the enmity of the world and its prince, God's wrath and indignation, and in the Lord's sufferings the mystery of the atonement, the mystery of that contest of wrath and love in the bosom of God, which dissolved

itself in His wrath's deed of love, in His love's execution of wrath. Here is no longer merely the struggle of sin with holiness, no longer merely the contest of the world and its prince with God and His Messiah; here is the holy war of God with Himself,—that mysterious wrestling of love with wrath in the holy of holies, till wrath surrenders, overcome because executed, but executed in the service of eternal love; for love which is older than wrath triumphs, but triumphs only because it has entered upon the path of holy wrath. Such a holy contest of God was waged in the sufferings of Jesus, and was brought to a triumphant end in the death of Jesus. Thus to consider the sufferings of Christ as the proper atonement for a sinful world, and the proper reconciliation of the Holy God, is the consideration which plants itself in the holiest of all, where God's holy presence is, and where the blood of atonement, sprinkled by the high priest on the mercy seat, covers the accusation of the condemning law.

But it is not the contest between God and Christ on the cross we are now to consider, but Christ's cross as it is *against* the world, and the enmity of the world as it is *against* the cross.

The people of Christ follow His footsteps and proceed on the way of His sufferings. And here also is a subject of the highest consideration: how these sufferings, appointed by the holy indignation of God, are yet, for the salvation of the world, to bless, and benefit, and do it good. True, our sufferings are not an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. This honour belongs to Christ alone, and to His sacrifice once offered, by which He perfected for ever them that are sanctified. But to conquer the hearts of God's enemies by the power of love, to this should the sufferings of His followers serve.

The consideration in our text, however, is that which

looks upon the Church in suffering not for the world, but against the world, and which sees the world opposed to the suffering Church ; it is that which sees here the old hatred and war between God and Satan, between truth and falsehood, light and darkness, holiness and sin.

Our text points out to us the contrary character of the Church and the world. But the Church stands in this opposition because she is in fellowship with Christ and His sufferings. Let us then consider

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST UNDER THE CROSS,

in its twofold opposition to the world, as it is taken out of the world to belong to Christ, and as it is hated by the world because it belongs to Christ.

I. The Church *as it is taken out of the world to be Christ's*. That is the first ; for it is the ground of the other : verse 19, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

"I have chosen you out of the world," says Jesus to His future Church. Therein lies a double thought ; that Christians are taken out of the world to which they formerly belonged, and that they belong to Christ, to whom they formerly did not belong, although they were destined to belong to Him. Therefore do the Scriptures regularly call Christians saints. For as that thing or that person is sanctified which no longer belongs to the world, but has been dedicated to God, whether it be as to relationship to God and the inward life, or as to His work and service outwardly, thus are Christians sanctified ; they no more belong to the world but to God, not through themselves but through the act of God : it is God's gift, not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. ii., 8). No one

makes himself holy, no one is of himself sanctified; but God takes us to be His own, and so makes us His saints, His chosen. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit." (John xv., 16).

Now in order to this, the first thing is, that we be taken from the world. The Church has placed itself under the cross of Jesus, and has thereby entered into fellowship with Him in His death. Through this it is dead to the world, and the world to it. Whoever, therefore, will be a member of the Church of Christ, of him must this be said—that he is no more of the world. We are all born belonging to the world, that is, to the whole empire of being and life, in which the will of God, the Creator and Holy One, does not absolutely rule as yet, but sin rules and vanity. Satan is called the god of this world (ii Cor. iv., 4), and under his dominion is born every child of wrath and servant of sin.

But on the waves of the water of baptism rests the rescuing vessel, the Church, rescuing all who will come or who are brought to be rescued and concealed from the enemy. Yet who is there who has not often fallen out of the sacred vessel? For with the life of the spirit from God there develops also the life of the flesh, and it longs after its home—the world which it has forsaken; and mightily draws the weak to the land of sin. Alas! how many leave the ship for ever, and turn back to the coasts where lust dwells and beckons to them! Demas hath forsaken me and hath loved this present world (2 Tim. iv., 10), complains Paul, as if he were an exception. Now it is the rule. Small is the little company of those of whom the word of the Lord to His disciples can be said in truth: "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore doth the world hate you." And even of these it can only be said with limitation.

Yes, so far as the Christian is a new man, is he not of this world. But how far are we new men? The man as he is by natural birth, and as he fashions himself and grows in will and thoughts, extends much farther than the structure of the new man given by regeneration. And although we dwell in the latter, nevertheless the former is continually drawing our heart into its circle, and it is with pain we withdraw ourselves again, and return into our new man.

Were the world to which we must die only outside us then would this soon take place. But now we carry it in ourselves, and must there forsake it. "Go out of thy country and out of thy father's house," (Gen. xii., 1) saith God: that is, out of the house in which he was born. The outward sundering of habits and ways of life is of no avail unless there is the inner separation from self, of which the Lord says: "If any one come to me and hate not his own life, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv., 26.) "For whoever loveth his life shall lose it, and whoever hateth his life in this world will preserve it to everlasting life." (John xii., 25.) He who is not delivered from the world in himself, has not become the property of God and Christ. "For the friendship of the world is enmity to God," and whosoever is full of the world is empty of God; only so far as we die to it does the life of God enter us.

But it is so with men in general as with the trees in the field. With the storms of autumn and winter they become bare and leafless, but the heat of spring allures them forth again. So, when calamity and grief come, the flesh is smitten, and its lusts and desires disappear as the falling leaf; but when the warm sun again shines, then thrive they wantonly as before. Such a man is not yet aright dead to the world, and bears not Christ's life in himself so truly as he should.

But if Christ live in us, there are many marks of it. I

mention only two :—That we are strangers here below ; and That we live in the Spirit.

The first is—that we know and consider ourselves to be pilgrims on earth, whose conversation is in heaven and whose home is with Christ. This has been at all times the confession of Christians : “ My life is a pilgrimage, I journey to the father-land, to the Jerusalem above. Would to God I were in thee ! ” Nor do these intensely spiritual desires cause us as Christians to become useless citizens of this world. We attend to the word of the prophet, addressed to those carried away to Babylon : “ And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.” (Jer. xxix., 7.) In such longing sink down however all joy and desire which are not of God, but a forgetting of our heavenly home. “ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.” (Ps. cxxxvii., 5.) The father-land binds with secret bands every man’s soul, and foreign parts can never become a father-land to him. And should not the heavenly home of our soul bind us still more powerfully, and cause us to become home-sick in this perishing world. Blessed are they who have this pining desire after home, for they shall arrive at home.

The other sign that we belong to Christ is this :—That we live in Christ. “ For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.” (Rom. viii., 9.) This apostolical word smites in pieces, with sharp-cutting sword-strokes, all false pictures of our own imaginations. But it is not difficult to know if we live in Christ. The foremost expression and the nearest form of life is the conversation. Everything that lives in heaven and on earth is a word uttered by God, all things are a divine discourse. But the proper mouthpiece of creation is man. True his tongue is noisy enough—who can tame it? But the words of man are on the surface, shallow

and superficial, and come not out of the depth of life, and when indeed they do, there often flames out a fire of hell. Look at the substance of men's conversation generally, is it not nearly always of outward and fleeting things, and scarcely even of the life of God in them? And if the conversation even has for its substance the divine and eternal, how often have we the impression that it sounds as something merely learnt on the tongue, or, perhaps, as something extorted and wrung out, and not a free production of a life in God and from God.

Christ's conversation about man fashions itself into prayer and confession. But the mouth often prays, while behind, in the heart, there are confused thoughts and feelings. Or the mind prays, but not the spirit. It is true the man, with his consciousness and thought, is engaged in prayer, but the whole deep inward life enters not into this the richest, greatest, and yet most simple and child-like act. Is it then to be wondered at that such a prayer finds no echo in the heart of God, seeing it does not spring from the Spirit of Christ, which alone unites together in one the heart of man and the heart of God?

The conversation of the Christian fashions itself into a confession of Christ. That is indeed the simplest form in which Christian life expresses itself. And there passes no day on which we do not in some way confess our faith. But does our confession show that we belong to Christ as His own? The Church under the cross confesses the CRUCIFIED ONE. What is the right confession with reference to Him? Let us look back to Gospel history. The Jews are mocking; their learned men have agreed that Jesus is not Lord and Saviour of the world. Peter wanders about unstable and broken-hearted. John stands, indeed, under the cross, but he is petrified and dumb with fright. Mary is overwhelmed with suffering. Throughout the wide world there is not one who with bright clear words confesses Christ, except the robber dying with

Him ; he is the speaker of humanity. His is a confession of Christ, which, springing from a divinely-wrought faith, sees in the crucified a veiled royalty, and, certain of His glorious coming, amid all the suffering of the present, longs for the future in words of earnest desire—"Lord remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom"—and therefore is already in the possession of salvation, and confident of communion with Christ in the world to come. This is the confession of one taken out of the world, and crucified to the world, which is not learnt, but, being born in the heart by God's Spirit, enters the lips as the voice of earnest desire.

Beloved ! the nationality of a man is known by his speech. May men ever be obliged to observe and feel from our conversation that we are not of the world, but chosen of Jesus Christ, and belonging to him.

II. *Christians are hated by the world because they belong to Christ.* It is of this that our text mainly speaks, and gives with reference to it such rich comfort.

But how shall I comfort the Church of the present time with the words of Jesus ? For now is there indeed apparent peace and friendship between the Church and the world, and there is nothing of that to be seen which the Lord speaks of : "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This word of comfort sounds strange in our ears, and thus becomes a word of rebuke. For assuredly there is at all times expressed in it the true relationship in which the Church and the world stand to one another.

"Therefore doth the world hate you." Yes, *hate*—so speaks the Lord—not merely despised, or is indifferent towards you. For all life stands in love or hatred ; and between these two there is no medium. So is the hatred of the world the Church's inheritance and robe of honour. For, as it is

chosen out of the world, all the love of the world is laid aside, how then should the world still possess and practise love towards the Church?

Such hatred of the world against God, in the person of His friends, is of old; it descends from the days of Cain and Abel. Then it became manifest that the enemy of God would find, in the hatred of the unrighteous against the righteous, a weapon which should serve him in contending against God's saving work in the world. For the righteous have had to experience such hatred from the unrighteous on account of their piety, and as Jesus is, in the highest sense, the Righteous One, and the Servant of God, therefore all the hatred of the world comes upon Him.

And this also is the ground of the world's hatred against Christians, as the Lord states in verse 21 of the text. "For this will they do unto you for *my name's sake*." So that, since He was snatched away to God, His life in the flesh continues in His believing people on earth. Why should we wonder then that the enemy of Christ contends against the Church of the Lord? Everything else on the earth is endured: sin and vice find security, and every pretension a recognition; but the living confession of Jesus Christ is a two-edged sword, and therefore the object of deadly hatred; and His Church, the judge of the world, would not be allowed to live. Whatever enmities may exist among the people of the world, they are one against Christ: for the word of Christ is the doom of the world, and victory over the wicked.

But therein consists also the *blessedness* of such sufferings to the Church, for it is fellowship with Christ. For He is hated and persecuted in it. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest *thou me*?" (Acts ix., 4.) So is it at all times. Paul, and with him the Church throughout the world, can say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Gal. vi., 17.) And how could it be otherwise? Whoever reproaches my Saviour,

must also reproach me ; the Christian cannot wish for a word of love and of praise out of a mouth which overflows with bitterness against his Lord. And certainly what in me will not displease the world, Christ will necessarily be displeased with in me.

But that is also the *comfort* of the Church in suffering, for she then knows that what God says by the prophet is applicable to her: "Whoever toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye." (Zech. ii., 8.)

And it is our *joy* and pride, our boast and song of triumph in tribulation, that we are counted worthy to suffer the reproach of Christ. Not only did Peter and John go on this account joyfully from the presence of the council after they were scourged (Acts v., 40, 41), and not only did Paul and Silas sing at midnight songs of praise to God in prison at Philippi (Acts xvi., 25), but it has ever been the manner of Christians, with Cyprian, to answer, when sentenced to death, "God be praised!" "And in the bloody persecution under Diocletian," says Eusebius, "the murderous swords became at last blunt and broke; the executioners were wearied and had to give up; but the Christians struck up songs of praise in honour of Almighty God, to the last breath of their lives."

Certainly it became otherwise when Constantine raised Christianity to be the religion of the state, and every one began to be a Christian on account of outward privileges, and the world placed itself in the posture of friendship to the Church of Christ. Then was the prophetic Church called out of the wilderness to the court, to engage in court service; then it laid aside its hairy garment, which prophets wore, and put on soft raiment; for they that wear soft raiment are in king's houses. Since then there has been friendship between state and Church. But certainly the Church has well nigh been smothered under the embraces of her friend.

It is true when Luther, called to revive the Church by the word of truth, bore testimony against the spirit of the world in the Church, the old hatred of the prince of this world again raised itself mightily, and Luther could triumphantly reckon as the seventh mark that the Evangelical Church is the true Church, the holy cross which it had to bear after Christ, and the fact of its being still called, like him, heretical and not to be tolerated. But can we deny that even the Protestant Church only too soon made its peace with the world?

Prophecy, however, speaks of a coming time of hatred when the name of Christ will not be suffered anywhere on the earth. It must come, and already the signs of the storms are visible : therefore let us fortify ourselves against that last great trial.

That we have now to suffer so little shows us that such a preparation is doubly necessary. Were there more confession of Christ in our conduct, it would be otherwise. For this confession is as a two-edged sword against the flesh, and the condemnation of a sinful world. The world hates us so little because we have so little hatred to it. It sees too much of itself in us, and even when we are not of it, we play the hypocrite too much with the enemies of God.

May God make us genuine Christians and give us the holy hatred, the holy intolerance of love which says, with the Psalmist, " Lord I hate those who hate Thee, I hate them in real earnest." * (Ps. cxxxix., 21.) For such hatred is real love, because it hates the world's sin and God's enemies ; for love would like to have all the world and all men on the side of God. This is the much defamed spirit of Old Testament intolerance. May God grant us such an Old Testament spirit !

But let us not forget ; the end of the Old Testament is John the Baptist, the preacher of repentance. For we learn such hatred of love only when we more thoroughly learn to

*German Bible.

hate the world in ourselves, and to go out of it, and on the contrary to enter and remain in Him who is the joy and love of our heart. May His Spirit teach us “to deny ourselves all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ” (Titus ii., 12—14). Amen.





THE ATONEMENT: A SERMON FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

By the REV. HORACE MONOD, *Marseilles*.

“*My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?*”—MATT. xxvii.,
46.

IIGHTEEN hundred years ago, on one of the public places of Jerusalem, a man, a Christian, accused of blasphemy, appeared on trial before a fanatical assembly, already determined to condemn him. Without allowing him time to finish his defence, they furiously rushed upon him, and, gnashing their teeth, dragged him out of the city, and stoned him to death. At the frightful moment when they were about to seize him, this man, who had nothing more to hope for on earth, appeared not only calm and peaceable, but positively triumphant. Indifferent to the cries of rage which resounded in his ears, as to the stones by which they murdered his body, he fixed his eyes on heaven: heaven opened to his look of faith; and as he saw the place the Lord had prepared for him there, he cried out—not to brave his persecutors, for whom he felt nothing but compassion, but to bear testimony to the peaceful and glorious assurance which filled his heart—“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

In the way, all bloody and glorious, which Stephen, the first martyr, opened by his death, there was soon seen crowding a multitude of Christians, of every rank, of each sex, and of every age, who in their turn surrendered their lives in torments, and all these confessors of the faith died like Stephen, with peace in their hearts, and songs of triumph on their lips. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, instead of flying from a cruel death, was so impatient to quit this world and go to his Saviour, that he ran to meet the ferocious beasts which were leaping from their dens to devour him. Felicitas, a woman of illustrious rank, with her seven children, remained unshaken by all the promises as well as by all the threatenings which they employed in the hope of leading her to save, if not her own life, at least that of her children; she turned towards them and said: "Look on high, my children, look to heaven, where Jesus waits for you with His saints; remain faithful in His love, and contend for your souls!" Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, when the proconsul offered to send him back free, if he would only revile Christ, replied: "For many years have I served Him and He has never done me evil; how could I blaspheme my Saviour and my king?" and calmly mounted the pile of wood; and from the midst of the flames, with which his head was crowned, as with a halo of glory, poured out into the bosom of his God a last song of thanksgiving. Perpetua, a young and noble woman, whom they tried in vain to shake, by presenting to her when in prison, at one time her aged father who was still a heathen, and at another her unweaned child, being left all bleeding on the arena by the beasts which had done but half their work, herself guided to the fatal stroke the trembling hand of the executioner charged to despatch her. Time would fail me to speak of Irenæus, and Cyprian, and Flavian, and the soldiers of the Christian legion, and hundreds of thousands besides, who, in the early ages of the

Church,* joyfully endured death agonies, not to mention those who followed them in the middle ages—those first missionaries who paid with their lives for the conversion of the heathens of the East; or later on, the Vaudois, and multitudes more, cruelly tortured and murdered by the Apocalyptic woman, “drunk with the blood of the saints;” or those in our days who have fertilised with their blood the battle-field of foreign missions: these all died in holy triumph, like that Christian woman who, at the moment of suffering martyrdom, exclaimed, “Crowns are being distributed to-day, and I am going to receive mine!”

There is, however, in the long roll of illustrious martyrs, one strange exception—but only *one*. There was One who suffered for the truth, but who, instead of meeting torture with heavenly peace and triumph, trembled at the thought of the fate which awaited Him, and cried out in deepest anguish: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Instead of beholding with a holy joy the approach of the last conflict, it caused Him terrible agony, and wrung from His heart, with bitter groans and tears, the prayer: “Oh, my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” (Matt. xxvi., 39.) Such was the inward fear and terror He experienced, that His sweat, changing its nature, fell to the ground like drops of blood. And in His last moments, instead of giving testimony, like all the other martyrs, to the divine power which not only sustained, but raised them above the feeling of suffering, He threw to heaven that cry of inexpressible misery: “My God, my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

What is then the answer to this moral enigma, what is

* During the persecution under Diocletian, which lasted six years, and in the single province of Egypt, one hundred and eighty-four thousand Christians died from tortures, and seven hundred thousand in exile or at the public works.

the explanation of this strange anomaly? Was this man, so troubled in presence of martyrdom, deficient either in submission to the commands of God or in love to the human race, which His death was intended to benefit? No; never was believer more perfectly submissive to the will of his heavenly Father; never was human being possessed of a more ardent and tender love to his fellow-men.

Had this man on His conscience some grievous sin, long ago committed, the remembrance of which awoke at His last moments and mingled bitterness in the cup of His death? No, never did man carry farther the exercise of all virtues; His heart was pure, His life was holy, and filled all through with works the most excellent; so that not even His enemies could convict Him of a single sin: therefore He alone of all the sons of Adam should have had the right of appearing before the tribunal of God, and of claiming from the sovereign judge eternal life as His reward.

Had this man a wavering and obscure faith? Were there in His mind doubts about the immortality of the soul, about the resurrection of the body, about the happiness and glory which awaited Him after death? No: quite the contrary, it was He who brought life and immortality to light; and He knew perfectly well, when dying, that He was returning to His Father and His God; that He should be that very day in paradise; that the Father was about to "glorify Him with the glory which He had with Him before the world was;" yea much more, He knew that His glory would be augmented in consequence of His humiliation; He knew that on account of having humbled Himself "to death, even the death of the cross," God would "highly exalt Him, and give Him a name which is above every name;" He knew that a bright and glorious cloud, like a triumphal car, would bear Him on high, and that the heavenly world would, in a transport of joy, cry out at His approach: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates!

and be ye lifted 'up ye everlasting doors ! that the King of Glory may come in."

Such were the moral conditions under which this man died, to whom alone of all the martyrs death was accompanied with fear and anguish, instead of being transfigured and rendered triumphant by the hopes of faith. What is then the solution of this awful mystery ? Seek and find, if it is possible, a plausible explanation of the misery of Jesus Christ's death, for doubtless you have all fixed on Him as that martyr who was the exception among all ; tell us, if you can, the secret of that trouble, of that fear, of that horror, of that agony, of that bloody sweat, of that feeling of being abandoned by God ; tell us how it was that He, among all the confessors of the truth, who had most reasons for dying in peace, for dying triumphantly, is the only one who is well nigh overwhelmed in prospect of death ?

Ah ! it is because there was something more in the death of Jesus than that of a martyr ! it is because He did not merely give up His life to confess the truth, and to seal the doctrine which He had preached, or to leave us an example of the most wonderful, the most holy, and the most touching virtues. No ! here is the key of the problem—it is because His death was an atonement for the sins of a guilty world ! it is because He offered Himself a spotless victim to the strokes of divine justice in the sinner's stead. It is because the mountain load of all human sin was laid upon His innocent head ; it is because, as our Surety, He was made to know all the inexpressible anguish that there is in the doom of a soul abandoned by God ; it is because He had to suffer (feelings of impiety and rebellion excepted) what we must have suffered in hell if we had been left under the power of sin. The preternatural darkness which, in His dying moments, enveloped the cross, was but the image of a darkness, much more awful, which enveloped His spirit,—the shadow of "the outer dark-

ness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth ! ”

The atonement ! such is the only possible explanation of that cry of anguish which we hear to-day from the cross ; of that last stroke, the most poignant of all, which finished the Saviour's passion ; of that keenest suffering which surpassed all His other sufferings as much as the torments of hell exceed the trials of earth. You have heard Jesus cry out, “ I thirst ! ” and have shuddered at the thought of the horrible torments which He endured in His body. You have heard Him say to John, “ Behold thy mother ! ” and to Mary, “ Behold thy son ! ” and you have been deeply moved at the thought of the moral agony which at that moment must have pierced the heart of son and friend ; you have heard Him railed at, on the cross, by His executioners, even by a brigand, and your heart has been oppressed at the thought of the countless humiliations which sharpened His death : but what are these humiliations, what is that filial and friendly grief, what are these tortures of the cross, what are all these united together, compared with that spiritual, unfathomable, inexpressible anguish which compelled the well-beloved Son of God to complain, as it were, of His heavenly Father, and to cry “ Why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” What are all human sufferings in comparison with the divine malediction ?

Let us stand on the verge of this abyss and reverently worship, for in vain should we try to fathom its depths. Let us not imagine we can penetrate all the mystery of the atonement ; let us not demand to know how the innocent could have taken the place of the guilty before divine justice ; how the curse of sin could have weighed down, even for one moment, the perfectly holy nature of Jesus Christ ; how the only begotten Son of God could have made atonement for the whole of a guilty race ; how, intensity compensating for duration, and the sufferings of the divine Victim having an infinite

value, the eternal punishment of sin could have been condensed into a moment, and become wholly exhausted in the Redeemer's passion; how the Lamb of God could have felt the anguish of sin without being touched by its defilement; whether the divine nature could really suffer, or only give an infinite value to the sufferings of the human nature which was united to it; all these questions, and all the others which might still be raised on the subject of that mystery of mysteries, are, in our present state of existence, unanswerable; let us consent to be ignorant of what the Scriptures have not revealed, and let us abstain from attempting to explain what is inexplicable to us, at least in this life; let us retain with an unshaken faith the fact of the atonement, that fact which it is impossible to call in question when we have once stood by the scenes of Gethsemane and of the cross; and have heard escape from the Saviour's dying lips that cry, the only one of the kind in the whole history of God's servants: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Besides, it is not in the Saviour's passion alone that this grand truth is taught us; for it is easy to support it by a multitude of Scripture declarations, as well under the ancient economy as under the new. The covenant of the law is altogether penetrated with the doctrine of atonement; and the minute ceremonies of the Levitical worship have neither value nor sense if they have not for their aim the preaching of that great truth. What is the meaning of the Paschal Lamb, of those slaughtered animals, of the blood of victims constantly shed, of that perpetual sacrifice which commenced and ended each day in the temple at Jerusalem, of that he-goat, cursed and charged with the sins of the people before being put to death, of all those purifications made by blood, and of that principle found at the bottom of all the Levitical worship—"Without shedding of blood there is no remission?" What signify all these if they are not so many living symbols of the

atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ? God takes no pleasure in the death agonies of animals; the blood of bulls and of goats has never blotted out a single sin; and it is impossible to see in all these anything else than practices at once sanguinary and childish, unworthy of divine wisdom, unless we see in them the perpetual preaching, addressed to an infant and uncultured people, of the necessity of an atonement by a more excellent sacrifice. The prophets also declare that the Levitical sacrifices could not procure for man the favour of God, and unanimously proclaim the sacrifice of a greater victim as alone efficacious to blot out sins. In the prophetic psalm in which the sacred writer puts into the Lord's mouth these words: "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings; if I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the earth is Mine, and the fullness thereof; will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" the Lord also says: "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by *sacrifice*." (Ps. l., 5—13.) The prophet Isaiah announces the abolition of the Levitical sacrifices in these words: "'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?' saith the Lord, 'I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.'" (Isa. i., 11.) And he proclaims also in the clearest and most precise terms another victim who would atone for sins: "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. For the transgressions of My people was He stricken; He shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. liii.) In the New Testament, the testimonies given to this capital truth of the Christian faith are so numerous, that my only perplexity is to choose among them. Let me nevertheless remind you of some of them; for I am anxious to place

beyond all dispute—at least for those who submit their heart and mind to the Word of God—this the sole and eternal basis of salvation; although now, as formerly, it “is to the Jew a stumbling block, and to the Greek foolishness.” Hear first the Saviour Himself: “The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.” “I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any one eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread which I shall give him is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” Hear St. John: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Hear St. Peter: “Redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree; by whose stripes ye have been healed.” Hear St. Paul: “We are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness in the remission of sins.” “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.” I leave out of the question the Epistle to the Hebrews, for it would be necessary to quote it all through. Hear, in fine, the Church triumphant in the songs of heaven: “Thou wast slain, and

hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."*

This grand truth, which is so clearly taught in Scripture, is moreover in perfect harmony with the data of Christian philosophy, as also with the strongest and deepest wants of the human heart.

It is the only means of pardoning sin which leaves the perfection of God's character intact. God would not be perfect, He would be at variance with Himself, if His justice was not absolute in its demands; if He could "hold the guilty as innocent;" if, after He had said, "The wages of sin is death, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the law," there could be sin without its being followed by death and malediction. Men can be indulgent, and ought to be so: they can pardon without atonement, and they ought to do so, because they are sinners. God cannot, because He is holy. Without doubt there remains for us an impenetrable mystery in the substitution of the innocent for the guilty: but it is a mystery which leaves the holiness of God intact. Who does not see also that the atonement, if it exalts the justice of God, does not less exalt His love: for how much greater is the love which does not pardon without having to make sacrifices, than that which pardons unconditionally, without being put to any cost by it?

If the atonement was required with respect to the demands of God's character, it was not less so with regard to man and the moral creation all through. It was necessary that punishment should be irrevocably attached to the transgression of the law, in order that the eternal hatred of God against sin might be proclaimed in the sight of men and of angels, and that moral order might not be shaken in the

* Mark x., 45; John vi., 54; 1 John ii., 1, 2; 1 Pet. i., 18, 19, ii., 24; Rom. iii., 23, 24; viii., 3; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii., 13; Col. i., 20; Rev. v., 9.

universe. If sin had been pardoned without atonement, the moral idea would have received in the intelligent creation an irreparable injury, the rule of good and of evil would be neither absolute nor inflexible any longer ; man might then love the sin which God would no longer hate, and God would have nothing to answer the sinner who should say, “ Let us sin, that grace may abound ! ” The sacrifice of the cross prevents these injurious consequences, and grants pardon without danger ; punishing transgression in the person of the Son of God, the cross proclaims the hatred of God against sin in a manner much more striking than if it had been the sinner himself who had suffered.

We must add that the atonement is the means of pardon best calculated to produce, in the case of the saved sinner, a sense of the pardoning love of God. Pardon heightened by sacrifice is far more touching, and will give birth to many more wonders of love and devotedness, than pardon unaccompanied by sacrifice. That a father should pardon his guilty son without being put to any cost by it, would lead that son no doubt to love so tender a father : but if that father, to save him from deserved chastisement, has been obliged to sacrifice his property, or his health, or his life, what will not take place in the heart of the son, and how will he ever believe himself able sufficiently to acknowledge a love so marvellous ?

Finally, the atonement was necessary to appease the cry of the human conscience, in order that nothing might be wanting to the security of the pardoned sinner. If there is one profound and universal want in the heart of man, it is that of an atonement ; we find it written everywhere in the history of humanity, from the fanatical Indian who gives himself to be crushed under his idol's car, to the murderer who, pressed by the sting of remorse, comes and voluntarily declares a crime which has remained a secret—as has many times been seen—in order that he may make atonement on the scaffold.

There is in the heart of every man an immense, an irresistible craving that sin should be punished. If sin was pardoned without an atonement, the pardoned sinner would not be tranquil, his peace would not be complete and without reservation ; he would have the feeling that moral order, disturbed by transgression, has not been solidly and decisively re-established ; he would not be content with a salvation founded solely on the love of God, and which would leave in the shade His justice ; he would carry as it were a vague fear that that justice, not yet satisfied, would some day awake, and that an account would be demanded from him of those sins which have remained unpunished. The sacrifice of the cross answers that deep and imperious want of our hearts. In virtue of that sacrifice our peace is founded on the justice of God as well as on His love, and all the perfections which constitute the divine character are interested all at once in our salvation.

My brethren, let us appropriate by faith a salvation so great, a salvation so complete, so perfect, so marvellously adapted to satisfy our conscience, to sanctify our soul, to penetrate our heart with love to Him who has saved us. We have now the secret of the cross, and we can answer that terrible "*Why ?*"—that cry of anguish which escaped the dying lips of Jesus Christ : " My God, my God ! WHY hast Thou forsaken Me ? " Thy God has forsaken Thee, O Jesus ! that we might not be ourselves forsaken. Thy God has let the curse lie upon Thee in order that the blessing might rest upon us. Thy God has abased Thee even to hell, that we might be elevated to heaven. Thou hast felt the bitterness of eternal death, in order that eternal life might be our portion. How should we possibly want from henceforth, and how should we be any other than "in all things more than conquerors," when we have to sustain us, in the combat of life, the cry of exhaustion uttered by our surety : " My God, my God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ? "

We have afflictions in this life, and these afflictions are sometimes very deep and bitter. When all our earthly hopes are overturned, when disease comes and stops our activity, and lays us on a bed of suffering, when we weep over the departure of those whose life was a part of ours, there are moments when our soul feels itself giving way, when it seems that we are almost sinking under the weight of our grief. But in these moments let us look to the cross of Jesus, and remember His cry : “ My God, my God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” If God abandoned Him to the bitterness of His affliction, it was in order that we might not be abandoned in ours ; if for a moment He withdrew from His well-beloved Son, it was that He might keep close to us in all our trials with His power and His love ; and the cry of anguish of our Divine Chief becomes to all His redeemed a word of encouragement, which says to us : “ I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee : behold, I am always with thee, even unto the end of the world ! ”

We have temptations in this life, and these temptations are at times very powerful and very poignant. There are moments when, forced violently to struggle with the power of evil, to pluck out the eye, to cut off the hand or the foot, which causes us to stumble, or to crucify the flesh with its lusts, we feel so feeble and helpless that we are ready to yield the victory to the enemy. But in these moments let us look to the cross of Jesus, and take into our hearts, to strengthen us, His cry of distress ; let us remember that He was abandoned for a moment to the powers of darkness, in order that we might not ourselves be surrendered to them ; that if Satan “ bruised his heel,” it was in order that we ourselves might be able to “ bruise Satan under our feet ; ” and that the plaintive words, the mournful groanings of our Saviour become to us His redeemed words full of consolation and power which say, “ God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above

what ye are able ; ” he is victorious over the world, who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

We are often obliged in this life to have recourse to prayer : and prayer thus becomes at times a struggle, a painful and sad combat. The Lord does not always judge it fitting to hear and answer our prayers immediately. There are moments when He hides His face, when a cloud seems to stop our prayers ; we do not feel the presence of God, we cannot penetrate to Him, our prayer returns into our bosom without bringing us consolation and peace. “Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud,” said Jeremiah to the Lord, “that our prayer should not pass through.” But in those moments let us look to the cross of Jesus, let us hear the cry of His distress, and let us say that if God abandoned Him for a moment and did not hear His prayer, it was in order that He might always hear ours ; let us say that if He delays to answer us, He wishes thereby only to prove our faith ; so that our perseverance may not fail to conquer the appearance of refusal ; and that the griefs, and tears, and anguish of our Saviour are to us tantamount to these delightful words : “Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh,—let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and grace to help in every time of need.”

We have in prospect a last combat, and that the most formidable of all. It will be necessary for us soon to take “the way of all the earth” and traverse “the valley of the shadow of death ;” it will be necessary to become acquainted with “the king of terrors ;” it will be necessary to bid a last farewell to all that we love here below, to sunder all the ties which bind us to earth, in order to appear before God. If, at that moment, our flesh shudder at the approach of dissolution, if our heart be troubled at the thought of judgment—ah ! we

will ~~look then to~~ the cross of Jesus, we will hear for a last time His cry of anguish, and we will remember that if God abandoned Him for a moment to that curse of sin which makes the bitterness of death, it was that we might be spared that bitterness; that if the terrors of God's judgment fell upon Him, it was in order that we might be able to go without fear before that judgment; we shall then feel that the anguish of His death secures our peace, and His cry of exhaustion will become for us the song of triumph: "O death! where is thy sting! O grave! where is thy victory? the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" And now "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."





THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST: AN EASTER SERMON.

By the Rev. HORACE MONOD, *Marseilles*.

"The Lord is risen indeed."—Luke xxiv., 34.

MANY persons consider Christianity from a point of view too exclusively philosophical and speculative. Christianity in their eyes is a philosophy which holds its place among the other philosophies—a system among the other systems of religion or of morals invented by the benefactors of humanity. True they place Christianity in the first rank for beauty and moral excellence—characters of credibility; but in the end it is only a philosophical system, a something which belongs to the domain of theory and of speculation, and which consequently leaves a large place for the vague and the uncertain.

This mode of looking at it—as injurious as it is unfounded—can only strip Christianity of its power to do good; for to no extent is Christianity a philosophy, if by philosophy is meant a system more or less plausible, a harmonising of ideas, which, while evolving more or less of truth, leaves even the smallest space for vagueness or uncertainty. Christianity is neither a speculation nor a theory; it is a history, a harmonised collection of facts, real and proved, as real as the existence of the Grecian or Roman people, as the life of Alexander or Cæsar.

The dogmas of Christianity are not sublime ideas merely ; they are historical facts, real events which actually took place in the past, or which actually will take place in the future. The fall of man by the seduction of the devil is a fact ; redemption by Jesus Christ is a fact ; the last judgment, eternal life, heaven, hell, are as much facts as if they were historically substantially accomplished.

Since Christianity is a history, it should be tested like every other history, by discussing the substantial reality of its alleged facts. It appeals not only to considerations drawn from the excellence and beauty of its teachings—considerations which cannot be within the reach of the multitude—but it would have us plead in its favour the testimony of facts, historical arguments which can be appreciated by the most simple and ignorant. To see if Christianity is true, we have not to surrender ourselves to deep metaphysical researches, we have not to study all the systems of religion and of morals that have been invented by men, and to compare them with the Christian system, in order to recognise its superiority : it is enough to examine whether certain facts have taken place or have not.

Among the facts which as a whole constitute Christian doctrine, there is one which is the basis of all others, and which alone draws to it all the others, so that it is enough to prove that single fact in order to demonstrate the whole of Christianity : I mean the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You will soon comprehend, without difficulty, how the truth of Christianity in its entirety depends on the reality of that resurrection.

Eighteen hundred years ago a man appeared in Palestine, who gave Himself out to be the Messenger and Son of God spoken of long ago in the sacred writings of the Hebrews. He said that He was commissioned to bring to the world a new religion, a fulfilment of the law and of the prophets, destined to save and to regenerate man fallen by sin ; He

declared that this religion would one day cover the whole world, and that to accept it was the only way of salvation for sinful and fallen man. These were high claims: before accepting them, it is our right and our duty to examine on what they are founded, what proofs there are to surround and support them. It is true that the religion and morals taught by this Man, sprung from the humblest class, are infinitely superior in beauty and excellence to all that have ever been invented by the sublimest intellects. It is true that the religion of the carpenter's Son is wonderfully adapted to the innermost wants of the human heart, and that where it has been adopted it has brought with it moral regeneration and happiness. But although these are strong presumptions in favour of the divine mission of Jesus, they do not present that complete and powerful demonstration upon which the simplest person may lay his finger. All these might be true, and Jesus nevertheless be but a beneficent and sublime genius, who might have had recourse to the fiction of a divine mission in order to cause His doctrines to be received.

We should be more satisfied if the question of the divine mission of Jesus were reduced to the testimony of an historical, external, substantial fact, so that we might be able to say with certainty, according as such an event has taken place or has not taken place, is Christianity a divine or human religion—is Jesus the Son of God or an impostor. Now, there is in the history of Jesus an event of that nature, it is that of His resurrection. Jesus did not, in fact, confine Himself to a declaration that He was the Son of God: He joined to that claim an easy means of verifying its validity by announcing His resurrection. “To prove that My mission is divine,” said He, “God Himself will ratify that mission by the most striking miracle. After My death, My body, laid in the grave like that of an ordinary man, will not remain there like that of an ordinary man, it will rise on the third day, animated by a new

life, and in that prodigy, which divine power alone can work, you will recognise that I have spoken the truth." Such was the prediction of Jesus : His adversaries did not dispute it, as we find them after His death making this statement before Pilate : " Sir, we remember that this deceiver said while He was yet alive, after three days I will rise again." It is then clearly proved that Jesus foretold His resurrection on the third day ; this is the first thing of which we have to take account in the discussion which occupies us. The point is to see whether the event agreed with the prediction. If Jesus truly arose on the third day, that fact alone proves that He spoke the truth when He gave Himself out to be the Son of God : for the resurrection of a dead man could be brought about only by divine power, and we cannot admit that God would ratify the testimony of an impostor. If then Jesus really rose again, all that issued from His mouth is perfectly true : it is true that He is the Son of God, that He died to save the world, that He will one day return to judge it : that the apostles to whom He professed to communicate His Spirit were inspired of God, that the religion which they preached is divine, that the pulpit which we occupy is the pulpit of truth, and the Word which you hear proclaimed is the Word of God Himself, which must judge you at the last day. If, on the contrary, Jesus has not risen, the falsehood of that single fact proves that He was not the Son of God, and, consequently, that His religion was only one long imposture : that His death was only a punishment like any other, that His apostles were only the propagators of a lie, that for the glory of a lie martyrs shed their blood, that Christians who have fallen asleep in the hope of a happy resurrection have died in peace with their faith resting on a lie ; and that it is in the name of a lie that we meet together in this sanctuary every Sabbath.

It is thus that the entire structure of our faith rests on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as its foundation. Hence, the first

preachers of the Gospel, the apostles, were appointed to be simply witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hence, St. Paul, also, sums up all the belief necessary to salvation as faith in that resurrection. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus," says he, "and if thou shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x., 9.) Because whoever believes in the resurrection of Jesus believes thereby in His deity, in His atoning death, and in all the rest of the Gospel.

It is therefore of the utmost importance for us to examine whether the resurrection of Jesus is an historical fact or a mere fable. It is on this vital point that all efforts should be concentrated, whether of infidels in attacking, or of Christians in defending, the faith. If infidelity can succeed in proving to us that Jesus Christ is not risen, we will surrender to it all the other points, and cast to the winds a faith which rests on a falsehood. If, on the contrary, we prove to infidelity that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact as solidly established as any other event of history, then we shall have a right to demand from it, under pain of irrationality and of folly, its submission to the entire Christian faith. Let us place ourselves then, for the study of the question, on the ground of history only. Let us examine and discuss it tranquilly, without enthusiasm, and without prejudice.

Jesus, arrested by the chiefs of the nation, and condemned to death as a blasphemer, expires on the cross; His adversaries do not dispute the reality of His death, and the spear-wound which He received in His side, and which must have penetrated to His heart, is sufficient to prove it. His body, taken down from the cross and wrapped in a winding-sheet, thickly strewn with aromatics, which alone would have exhausted the sources of life, is laid in a new sepulchre where no one had before been placed. An enormous stone, sealed with the state seal, closes the entrance of the tomb, and to prevent even the possibility

of a removal, His enemies obtain from the Roman governor a detachment of soldiers, who are put in charge to keep guard over the corpse. All these are historical facts, and so fully established, that even His most malignant foes must admit them. One night glides away, then a day, then another night ; the third day He rises—the very day pointed out beforehand by Himself as that of His resurrection. The sepulchre is found empty : that fact has as yet been disputed by no one, and the enemies of Jesus are the first to recognise it, since to explain it they spread abroad the report that His body had been carried away while the soldiers slept.

It is then perfectly clear that the sepulchre was found empty on the third day. Now that circumstance can be explained in but one of two ways : either the body of Jesus was carried away by His disciples as the Pharisees pretended, or He indeed rose as He had prophesied. Look for a third explanation, and you will not find it.

Can we reasonably suppose that the body of Jesus was carried away by His disciples ? And, first, is it probable that the plan of such an enterprise could have entered the minds of the disciples ? The sepulchre, as we have seen, was guarded by a detachment of soldiers, and to conceive of carrying away a trust so guarded, demanded not merely courage, but a daring which amounted even to rashness. Now the apostles have always been pointed at as timid and cowardly men. When the attendants of the Sanhedrim laid hands on Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, we are told that all his disciples forsook Him and fled. Peter, the least timid of them, followed Him afar off as far as the high priest's court, which he entered ; but there the last effort of his courage ceased, and at the voice of a servant maid, who simply asked him if he had not been with Jesus the Galilæan, he basely denied his Master and his Friend. Such men would never have braved the sword of Roman soldiers in order to rescue the body of Jesus. The courage

which they had not in the presence of their Master would not be forthcoming all at once, when His enemies had apparently crushed Him for ever : what they did not do to save their Lord when living, they would not do to recover His corpse.

But let us, if you wish, forget the timid character of the apostles ; let us allow them all the courage, all the daring, which such an enterprise demanded : even then it would be impossible to admit that they had formed a plan for carrying away the body of Jesus, in order to publish afterwards that He had risen. To make themselves the partisans and propagators of such an imposture, it was necessary that they should find some interest in doing it. People do not lie without aim or for the mere pleasure of lying ; the impostor has always some interest, secret or avowed, which causes him to act : interest of ambition, or of gain, or of pleasure. Now, what had the apostles to gain by preaching the resurrection of Jesus. There was no honour, only opprobrium ; no riches, only poverty ; no delightful and happy life, only persecution and death. I ask, can we seriously suppose that the apostles could have completely surrendered themselves to poverty, to reproaches, and to martyrdom, with no other object than to support a falsehood ; merely to give themselves the pleasure of justifying an impostor who had made a plaything of their credulity ? This would be attributing to them an excess of irrationality and of folly, which everything in their conduct and in their writings gives the lie to.

But, for the sake of argument, never mind this ; let us enter upon the supposition, utterly irrational and foolish as it is, that the apostles, acting contrary to their character and to their interest, could have formed, and that they actually did form, the mad project of carrying away the body of Jesus : here again we shall find them stopped, for they could never have executed their plan. Let them tell us how they made them-

selves masters of the soldiers put there to guard the sepulchre. Did they conquer them by force? The apostles were feeble, unarmed, and few. Did they seduce them by payment of gold? The apostles had "neither silver nor gold;" they abandoned one life of poverty to find in following Jesus a poorer life still; it was "without purse and without bag," that their Master sent them forth. Shall we be told, as the Pharisees pretended, that the soldiers were asleep, and that the disciples took advantage of that sleep to commit their theft? Difficulties, I should have said impossibilities, press upon that explanation. First, it is not likely in itself that a whole band of soldiers, and especially of soldiers appointed to guard such a trust, would be asleep at once. That is especially difficult to be believed under the system of Roman discipline, which threatened death against the sentinel who slept at his post. But, nevertheless, were we willing to suppose that the soldiers, in defiance of discipline, and at the peril of their lives, were all asleep at the same time, it is impossible to believe that the noise which the disciples must have made in rolling away the stone would not have awaked a single one of them. In fine that which completely throws discredit on this explanation, and proves its absurdity, is this, that it is the soldiers themselves who give it to us. "The disciples," say they, "came by night and carried away His body *while we slept*." Here the imposture betrays itself. They forget that if they were actually asleep they could not have seen what they allege to have occurred.

You see then, that even supposing the apostles to have formed the plan of carrying away the body of Jesus, which we have proved improbable to the last degree, that plan could not have been carried out.

Yet let us take one step more in advance in this series of impossibilities, let us admit that the apostles not only formed such a project, but that they really executed it. I say, that even

supposing all this, it is impossible to admit that they would have acted afterwards as they did. How should they naturally set about it, if they wished to accredit the fable of a pretended resurrection, which was but a removal of the body? Before speaking of it, they should have waited long enough for the events which had come to pass at Jerusalem, before the eyes of all the people, to be forgotten, or at least but vaguely remembered. Surrounding themselves with precautions and with mystery, they ought to have commenced by spreading abroad their imposture in the innermost and least numerous circles, and after these reports, by being repeated from mouth to mouth, had acquired a certain consistency, then only should they have ventured to preach them in public. They should have commenced by relating the fable of the resurrection in remote parts, where the events at Jerusalem might have perhaps been unknown; they should especially have been very careful not to proclaim it first and foremost in the very town where Jesus had died by capital punishment, to those very people who had caused Him to be put to death, and who were too interested to be deceived. That is what the apostles should have done, and what follows is what they did. It is only fifty days after the death of Jesus, and while the recollection of His punishment is still fresh and vivid in the mind, that they set about to make Him God. It is in the heart of Jerusalem, it is within sight of Calvary, where the cross still stood; it is in the full sunshine of publicity; it is before the whole multitude which had seen Jesus crucified; it is in the presence of those very persons who crucified Him, who have power still in their hands, and who have only to give command in order to have them put to death themselves: it is in the midst of such circumstances that they commence to preach their imposture. It is to the very enemies of Jesus, and to their own enemies, that they come and say, "This Jesus whom ye crucified hath God raised up again, and we are all

witnesses of it." Here again, let us say, there would have been an extreme irrationality and folly, which nothing authorises us to suppose in the case of the apostles.

But after all, let us follow to its extreme point the slope along which our argument hurries us : let us push these matters to the utmost ; let us go to the very farthest limits of what is allowed in a matter of supposition ; let us admit, by a last effort of imagination, that the apostles really acted so madly : they chose Jerusalem, they addressed the very murderers of Jesus, to preach to them fifty days after His death the fable of His resurrection. What will happen ? Without doubt the outcry of the public will drown their voice and accuse them of imposture, or rather of folly ; without doubt the Pharisees and the chiefs of the people will not render to the dreams of the disciples a respect which they never felt for the virtues of their Master. They will hasten to have these fanatics arrested and thrown into prison, if indeed they do not cause them to perish by capital punishment. That is what ought naturally to have happened, and *this* is what did take place. Among that immense multitude, in the midst of the declared enemies of Jesus, not a single voice is raised to accuse them of imposture. What do I say ? These very men who have just before cried crucify ! suddenly touched with a chimerical compunction, come and confess that it is really the Son of God whom they have caused to suffer death as a blasphemer, and at the end of that first preaching of a fable, the falsehood of which was proved, three thousand persons fall at the feet of the Galilæan fishermen, and ask for baptism ! My brethren, it must be acknowledged that if the carrying away of the body of Jesus had such effects, there certainly accompanied it a more astonishing miracle than even that of the resurrection.

You see, we cannot broach the supposition that the disciples might have carried away the body of Jesus, in order after-

wards falsely to publish His resurrection, without being lost in a long series of impossibilities. There is impossibility with regard to the character of the disciples, because we must suppose courage and daring to belong to men who are always described as fearful and cowardly ; impossibility in respect of the motive which would have led them to act, since they would have acted contrary to their most evident interest, and have run in the way of persecution and martyrdom, for the sole pleasure of supporting a fable ; impossibility with regard to the means of executing it, for they could neither have overcome the guards by force, nor have corrupted them by gold, nor have lulled to sleep their vigilance ; impossibility with regard to the measures to be taken to publish their imposture, since they could never have thought of preaching first at Jerusalem, fifty days after the death of Jesus, in the very presence of His murderers ; impossibility, in fine, with regard to the consequences of such conduct, since the Jewish people and the Pharisees would never have consented to bow their heads in silence before a fable which condemned themselves, and which they had as much interest as facility in exposing and condemning.

It is then proved, enough and more than enough, that the disciples of Jesus could not have carried away His body with the view of falsely publishing His resurrection. Consequently, the resurrection of Jesus is proved ; for we must explain in some way the fact of the tomb being found empty on the third day, and if the body was not carried away, the only explanation which remains is that which was given by St. Peter to the Jews on the day of Pentecost : “ God hath raised up Jesus, having broken the bonds of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden by them.” To have the right of disputing the resurrection of Jesus, it would be necessary to prove that the chain of reasoning which we have followed is not solid ; not only one or two links of that chain must be broken,

but all the links in succession ; for one of them would alone be sufficient to maintain intact the truth of the resurrection ; and if we have piled proof upon proof, if we have made the argument three or four times stronger than was necessary, it is that it might be proved with an evidence beyond every kind of dispute that Jesus is indeed risen again. Certain difficulties might indeed be raised on the subject of that event : we might find it extraordinary, mysterious, inexplicable ; we might be surprised at such and such a circumstance following the resurrection, as for instance that Jesus did not show Himself to a greater number of persons : but all that could not shake the reality of the fact itself ; that fact rests as solidly established as any event of history. If you still doubt the resurrection of Jesus, you must be abandoned to a universal scepticism on all those facts which come to you through the testimony of others ; you must doubt everything which you have not seen with your eyes, not touched with your hands ; you must doubt the existence of the Greeks and of the Romans, of Alexander and of Cæsar ; you must doubt that Napoleon existed, if you have not seen Napoleon ; you must doubt that a city called Rome exists, if you have not yourself seen it. None of these facts are more solidly established than the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Your understanding has but one means of escaping that absurd consequence, that universal scepticism, and that is to admit the declaration of our text, "The Lord is risen indeed."

Yes, Jesus has really risen again, and, consequently, as we have seen, the truth of the whole of Christianity follows. Jesus is in truth the Son of God, and everything that issued from His mouth is the most exact truth. Resume then, O Jesus, my Saviour and my God ! the place which belongs to Thee ; mount again the throne of glory from which we have caused Thee for a moment to descend, yet in order to strengthen Thee better there, and pardon Thy servant if, to

defend Thy Gospel, he has spoken for a moment the language of infidelity; pardon if he has fallen in with a supposition which would have been impious had not its aim been to cause Thy Deity to shine in all its splendour! No, it is not with the blood of an impostor that Thou didst stain the cross of Calvary; that blood was really, as Thou hast declared, the ransom which God Himself paid for a sinful and lost world. No, it is not a religion of falsehood that the apostles made themselves the propagators of; it is not a lie which caused the temples of false gods to sink, chased away barbarism, and regenerated the world! No, it is not for the glory of a lie, ye martyrs of the first ages, that your blood reddened the sand of the arenas and the swords of the executioners; that your bodies, enveloped with pitch and with resin, were burnt like torches, to light up the orgies of a Nero! No, parents, brothers, sisters, fellow-Christians, who have fallen asleep before us in the hope of a blessed resurrection, you have not died in peace, putting your dependence on a lie; we will go again, and cast upon your tomb those flowers which are an emblem of immortality; we will go, and over your bodies salute the certain prospect of an eternal reunion; for these bodies of dust which the worm of the tomb has devoured, will rise one day full of life and of glory, transformed after the image of Jesus Christ who is risen again! No, it is not with the preaching of a lie, ye walls of this temple, that ye have re-echoed during so many years; it is not the worship of a lie which re-unites us here every Sabbath, and the pulpit which we are proud to occupy is not a pulpit of falsehood!

Yes, my dearly beloved brethren, since Jesus Christ has risen again, the Gospel which we preach to you is the truth, the eternal truth, the truth of God Himself; everything which has proceeded from the mouth of Jesus, everything which has flowed from the pen of His apostles, everything which is con-

tained in this book is true, of historical, substantial truth, beyond all dispute; all these words will be fulfilled to the letter, and it is by these that we shall be judged at the last day. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

You can judge after this, what is the true character of the Gospel ministry and of its teachings. The ministers of the Gospel are witnesses, and their teaching is a testimony. We are not religious philosophers coming to ask your judgment, or to discuss with you the result of our own meditations or the result of another man's meditations. We are simply witnesses, who come and give evidence before you of certain facts. It is true that we have not seen these facts with our eyes, but we are as certain of them as if we had, for the truth of these facts rests on the words of Jesus, and the truth of those words rests on the fact of His resurrection. Thus our words, if we are faithful to our mission, have a character of sovereign and infallible authority. We do not come to you with hesitation, proceeding by experiments to find out with you the truth. We come and say to you: we have found the truth, we bring it to you: here it is. We do not merely say, I believe, I foresee, I presume, I hope, I fear, it is probable: we say, I know, I am sure; I am sure that all men, without exception, are sinners before God; for it is written: "There is none righteous, no not one." I am sure that all men have merited eternal condemnation; for it is written: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." I am sure that there is no other means of salvation for man than faith in Jesus Christ; for it is written: "That whosoever hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." I am sure, in fine, that it is necessary to have the heart changed by the Holy Spirit in order to enter heaven; for it is written: "Except a man be born again, born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

And to apply these great truths to you who hear me, I declare with the most complete certainty, based on the declaration of God Himself, that you will perish eternally if you do not give your heart to Jesus Christ. You will perish eternally if you are not converted, if you do not renounce the lusts of the flesh and the vanities of the world, if you do not become by faith new creatures. This is no doubt a terrible statement, but it is an infallible truth. It is not an oratorical declamation, a vain threatening such as they make to frighten children with, it is a fact, the most formidable, but the most certain of all facts. We have acquired the right to insist upon this declaration, and to present it as a truth which you cannot dispute ; for that declaration is found in the Gospel, and we have proved to you the truth of the whole Gospel, by proving the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Either show clearly that the proofs of that resurrection are not solid, or thoroughly receive as infallible truths the declarations which the Gospel contains. I repeat it therefore, for your eternity is at stake, that if you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you must go—— what shall I say? Shall we, in this day of grace and reconciliation, shall we, ministers of reconciliation and grace, show you, under your feet, eternal fire, “ the lake of fire and brimstone,” and the “ outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth ? ” No, no, far from us be such saddening pictures ; we hope, with regard to you, better things, my dearly beloved friends. We hope your hearts will not always remain closed to the appeals of God’s grace. We hope that even to-day you will become attentive to that voice of pardon and love which comes down from the cross of Calvary, and to that other voice of pardon and love which rises from the Lord’s table—those two divine voices which unite and blend together in saying to you : “ My son, my daughter, give me thy heart ! ” We hope that even to-day you will long to experience that unspeakable peace of a soul which knows that it is reconciled

to God,—that peace which comes down from on high, and which alone can quench our thirst after happiness,—that peace which makes all the joys of the world insipid in comparison, and which causes whoever has tasted it to say: “Lord, evermore give me of this water, that I may not go elsewhere to draw!” We hope that this festival of the resurrection of our Saviour will be that also of your spiritual resurrection, and that, dating from this day, you will seek to lead, with the help of God’s grace, a new life—even the life of the redeemed of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus is risen, it is not only to prove the divinity of His words and works, but also, as the Apostle tells us, that “we should walk in newness of life.” My brethren, would you not like to know by experience what that spiritual resurrection is,—that new and holy life, conformed to the life of Jesus? Do you not feel the need of dying to sin, to the vanities of the world, to the lusts of your hearts, in order to live a life “concealed with Christ in God?” Do you not feel the need of grace to fashion your life according to the divine command: “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God?” Do you not feel that a life, consecrated to the glory of God, is the only one that answers to your destiny, the only one which can give you peace of soul and true happiness? Ah! do not resist that divine instinct, which is no other than the voice of the Holy Spirit in your hearts. Give yourselves to God as those who have become alive from the dead; present to Him your bodies and your souls to be a lively and holy sacrifice! be not conformed to the present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove that the will of God is good, agreeable, and perfect! Rise again, from this present moment, with Jesus in holiness, and expect at the last day to rise with Jesus in glory! Amen.



THE THREE AGES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE.

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"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."—LUKE ii., 52.

GOD in Christ has appeared among men to raise up again fallen humanity. In order to do this, He laid hold upon it in the cradle, and left it only at the tomb ; passing through all the stages of its growth, traversing in succession all the ages of life, sanctifying our nature, at all periods of our existence, and causing us to see in His person, from the moment when He came into the world till that of His exaltation in glory, the perfect type of innocence and holiness. It is thus that He became in turn an infant, youth, man : an infant obedient and submissive ; a young man without reproach, and keeping Himself pure from all defilement of the flesh and of the world ; a full-grown man showing us in His character and in His conduct the model of absolute perfection. He stopped there ; for He by whom and for whom all things were made (Col. i., 16.), ought not to fail ; it was necessary that He should offer Himself as a sacrifice in all the vigour of age, and in all the fulness of life ; it was not becoming that He should present to us the picture of decrepitude and of old age.

But as there has been a birth of the Son of God in the

man Jesus, a growth of the God-man in the person of the Redeemer, so there has been, there is, and there will be to the end of time, a birth and growth of Christ in all the souls belonging to Him. Christ is truly born, He grows up, He develops Himself in His people. There is in turn, in their case, the infant, the youth, and the grown-up man, and He completes in them the work of His grace till they come to the height of His perfect stature. It is the description of the three ages of Christian life that I desire to undertake to-day, in the persuasion that the subject may be useful, to believers, in helping them to turn over in their minds the way which they have already passed, and to measure that which remains for them to go over ; and to unbelievers, in marking out for them a way which it is their greatest interest to make haste to enter upon. May the Lord bless to that purpose our efforts, and further our design !

To those of you, my brethren, who may think that the plan of this meditation rests upon a mere allegory, by means of which we take delight in spiritualizing the facts of Scripture history, I remark that nothing is more common in the Gospel than the ideas which serve as its basis. For example, St. Paul says, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers : for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." (1 Cor. iv., 15.) There is paternity in the order of grace. The same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, expresses himself in these terms : "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. iv., 19.) There is at once birth and growth according to the Spirit. The Apostle affirms that, born in Christ Jesus, the Galatians had need of higher faith to develop themselves in Him and to acquire the vigour of young men in spiritual life. In fine, St. Paul again, in different parts of his epistles, and especially in that to the Ephesians, speaks of the inward man and of the full-

grown man, and exhorts us to labour to raise ourselves to the measure of the perfect stature of Christ. (Eph. iv., 13.) Here is the mature age, which is not followed by any feebleness, which has no old age to fear, and which has in prospect a whole and complete eternity for further strengthening and activity.

But even if the Gospel had not been so explicit as it is on the question which occupies us, and did not justify in formal terms the very expressions we have used, would not the preaching of conversion and sanctification with which the Gospel abounds have been sufficient to authorise them? For what is it to be converted and to be sanctified if it is not to be born again, and, having been born again, “to grow in grace, and in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ?” It cannot be doubted that the Word of God sets a very great value upon the different ages of human life in order to address to fathers, to youths, and to children, the counsels which suit each of them, and to remind them of the duties which are peculiar to them. But it must be admitted that the Gospel greatly exalts the ages of grace in the spiritual order, above the ages of nature in the physical order. It is, however, to be remarked that the number of years in the physical order does not always determine the progress that has been made in the spiritual order, since it may happen that a young man will be well instructed in the things of God while an old man will be perfectly ignorant of them; or that the heart of a child may be opened to the love of the Saviour, whilst that of his father remains closed to it.

Since then the different ages of the spiritual life are so important to be known, let us apply ourselves to study the character of each of them, commencing with the first, that is to say, with *infancy*. It is probably of the first degree of the Christian life that the Apostle St. John intended to make mention when he said in his first Epistle, “Little children, I

write unto you because ye have known the Father." (1 John ii., 13.) The knowledge of the Father is in effect one of the first views of God which is revealed to the converted soul; the love of the Father is one of the first feelings which is developed and rules there. As it regards the soul everything is summed up in reconciliation with God. That which makes it smile with holy emotion is the certainty of its adoption; that which fills it with joy is the good news of pardon in which it has believed. Before the idea of God expressed nothing to it, or left it cold and lifeless, or even terrified it; for whether it looked upon Him as Creator, or represented Him as Judge, it could approach Him only with languor or terror, and, in consequence, could not love Him. But since it has learnt through Christ to cry Abba, Father (Rom. viii., 15), it has tasted a peace which was unknown to it, it has experienced a love to which it was a complete stranger, it has felt born within itself a life entirely new; and in its new atmosphere of grace and liberty it enjoys itself like the captive whose irons have been broken, or like the condemned one, to whom has just been read a sentence of pardon, and whose prison-doors have been thrown open. The feeling of God's goodness is sometimes so powerful, and clasps the soul with so much force, that it absorbs in it every other feeling. Sin is as it were benumbed, the passions seem extinguished, the evil tendencies of our nature appear chained up; one would be tempted to think that there is room in the soul of the reconciled sinner for nothing but gratitude towards his Saviour and his God, for joy and for love. But just as, in the case of the little child, the ruddiness and bloom of its cheeks are connected with an extraordinary feebleness, a feebleness so great that a blast is all that is required to destroy it, so, if it happen that those sensible joys and those thrills of happiness which God sometimes in His goodness grants His children at the time of their con-

version, as the pledges of their eternal union with Him, should be withdrawn, you will see them at once uneasy and agitated, and struggling with their natural corruption as if knowing not any longer what to set about or whom to apply to. It is because they have not yet learned from God's Word, and from experience, that here below we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. v., 7); that the joy of salvation is a gift of God, but not a permanent state of the soul; that our confidence ought to rest on the promises of God and not on the sensible manifestations which He grants us of His love; and that we must be able to cleave to Him, to remain faithful to Him, and to walk in His commandments at the very time when He hides Himself and refuses us the delightful feeling of His presence. Many conflicts, many schools, many disappointments will be necessary to teach them these things, and it is only by lesson after lesson, and step after step, that they enter the second age of life, the period of *youth*.

With strength commences the struggle. As long as the young child, feeble and toddling, is attempting to walk, the Lord spares it temptations which would be fatal, considering the inexperience and infirmity of its age. He feeds it with milk, and sustains it with the joys of its first love. But in proportion as it increases in stature and in favour, He prepares for it conflicts in which beforehand He assures it of victory. "Young men," said the Apostle John, alluding probably to this second age of the Christian life, "I write unto you, because you are strong, and have overcome the wicked one" (1 John ii., 13, 14). Here in effect is the period when the Christian calling appears more under the image of bearing arms, and the Christian life under the aspect of a war. The believer has become a soldier, who does battle under the orders and colours of his divine leader. The world, and all that is in the world, presents itself to him in a state of avowed

hostility to God. He recognises the truth of what Scripture says, that "the wisdom of the world is foolishness ;" that its maxims are only falsehood and lies ; that its pretended peace is a real death ; that its pleasures are vanity and vexation of spirit ; that its glories are dust ; that its virtues have no solidity. Judging of things according to the ideas furnished by the Word of eternal truth, he perceives everywhere, even where seriousness and the moral proprieties are most observed, a profound forgetfulness of God, a stupid indifference to the immortal interests of the soul, a frightful levity disguised under deceitful appearances, a practical unbelief worse than positive infidelity, a perpetual revolt against the divine law, a complete denial of Jesus Christ. In this position, he proves, like his Master, the need of testifying against the world, that its deeds are evil. (John vii. 7.) He does so by his conversations ; he does so especially by his conduct. He has taken his side not to be conformed to this present evil world (Rom. xii., 2) ; he has reckoned to be hated of all men because of the name of Christ. (Matt. x., 22.) Opposition does not shake him, scoffs scarcely touch him ; in the midst of the most powerful assaults he rejoices at being counted worthy to suffer something for his Saviour, and finding the very opprobriums which are rained upon him, a seal of his calling, and at the same time the accomplishment of the Master's words, he remains firm and unshaken. A young man, he has overcome the wicked one, he has entered the age of vigour, He has taken a character of energy and of decision, he has all the features of youth. Important period of life, when there will surely be raised around him clouds of dust similar to those with which the enemies of the Christian name once covered Stephen the confessor of Jesus ! Interesting age, which some Christians would like to avoid, and who to extricate themselves from the sorrows which are inseparable from it try to enter upon a kind of compromise with

the world, and imagine a bastard Christianity which exposes to no persecution ! Difficult season, which has its perils and its temptations, but which, when well endured and courageously passed through, gives later on to Christian character a rectitude, a self possession, a consistency, and a fidelity, which those who esteem themselves happy as having easily passed over that second period of Christian life, will with difficulty afterwards acquire !

At that age, however, notwithstanding its amiability and beauty, the tendency of Christian life is outward, rather than inward ; the conflicts have for their object and for their enemy the external rather than the internal world. The confession of the name of Christ gets the mastery over the sanctification of the heart and of the life ; and the profession of the truth is regarded of more value than obedience and submission. But a series of lessons contrived in the providence and grace of God will gradually teach the believer, glowing with youth, and in possession of so much vigour, that his affections and passions are more difficult to subdue than the opposition of the world is hard to endure ; that it is easier to give testimony to the truth than to put it in practice in the life every moment ; that after all, that which is of importance, is that our character be changed ; that our bad habits be rooted up ; that our will yield more and more to the will of God ; that we become humble, patient, and charitable in the school of the Saviour, and that, without neglecting to confess Jesus, which is and ever will remain a duty, we be occupied with ourselves more than with others, and that we make knowledge of our own heart and of our spiritual advancement, the great and principal study, yea, the habitual labour of our life.

When, by divine grace, the believer has taken this direction, he approaches the third period of the Christian life, that age of *maturity* of which, without doubt, St. John speaks in these words : " Fathers, I write unto you, because ye have

known Him who is from the beginning" (1 John ii. 13). He who is from the beginning is Jesus Christ, of whom the Apostle has said elsewhere that He was "in the beginning with God" (John i., 1). There is in this passage of the beloved disciple an experience which all Christians, more or less, have had: it is, that if the knowledge of Christ leads us to God, the love of the Father draws us back to the Son. In the first periods of awakening we only embrace Christ as the shipwrecked one seizes the plank intended to save him from death and help him to reach the opposite shore; He is to us the mysterious ladder erected between heaven and earth, the bridge thrown over the abyss sunk between God and us by sin. We speedily ascend the ladder, we rapidly cross the abyss, all joyous at having found again the way to our Father's house. But later on, and in proportion as we rejoice more in the delights of reconciliation with our Father, we learn better to appreciate the merits and love of Him who has procured this for us at the price of His unspeakable sacrifice. He becomes the well-beloved of our soul, we cannot do without Him; in His knowledge we see all our wisdom; in His love all our life; in communion with Him all our strength; in His righteousness all our holiness. His person, His titles, His character, His works, His power, are presented to us under a light ever brighter, and solicit more and more the attention of our mind and the affections of our heart. As Son of God, He commands our adoration, and we give glory to Him because God of God, God with God, God as God. As Redeemer, He presents to us His perfect sacrifice and His infinite merits which we accept daily with a need ever new, as our only titles to the Father's love and to eternal life. As King, He exercises His mild reign over our souls, and all our desire is that He shall rule there in an absolute manner. As Prophet, He conducts us into truth by His Word and by His Spirit: His teachings, which we put above all teachings, and

His voice, which is to us that of the Master, cause the teachings of the world and the voice of our passions to be silent in our ears. As Master and Pattern, He animates us to walk in His steps, and presents us in His life, for every case and in all its details, an example of perfect virtue and personified holiness. As "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. liii., 3), He prepares for us the cup and pours out for us those bitter draughts which His grace helps us to drink, and which cause us to acquire a new feature of resemblance to Him. As Judge of the world, we wait for His coming to consummate the deliverance of our souls, raise our bodies, and put us in possession of the glory which He has promised us. All our past, all our present, all our future are in Him. All our past, where His blood blotted out, and His love pardoned, our transgressions; all our present, which is placed under the protection of His power; all our future, which is guaranteed to us by His faithfulness. In proportion as we gaze upon Him by faith, as we identify ourselves with Him by love, and as we seek to imitate His divine character, we become transformed into His image from glory to glory. (2 Cor. iii., 18.) Life developes, the inward man is strengthened, and when the fruit is ripe, it falls, and the Lord gathers it into His granaries.

To the picture which we have just tried to draw of the Three Ages of the Christian Life, it is necessary to add some observations. And first, in giving you a history of the work of grace, a history which we believe to be founded on Scripture and on experience, we have not pretended to say that these three periods must be found with all Christians, feature for feature, in the same degree and after the same manner. The general features and characteristics of regeneration are modified in different individuals, according to their antecedents, their character, their outward circumstances, and especially the means so varied which Providence employs

to subject them to the Gospel. These different ages are shorter with some, longer with others ; less salient with these, more decided with those. Thus, there are believers who traverse rapidly the two first ages, who scarcely stop there, and who arrive at the third with an incredible rapidity. In their first steps in the way of salvation, and while still children, they lead other souls to Christ, and see their numerous spiritual posterity acquiring in a little time the steadiness and self-possession of full-grown men and the perfected experience of old men. There are others, with whom the feeling of reconciliation with God and of love to Christ is less lively than we have pictured it, because it has been preceded by agitations of conscience not so deep, by struggles against sin not so intense. There are others who have felt in a less sensible manner the opposition of the world, because there have not been in their families, or among their connections or the society in which they live, causes of hostility so serious or so decided. There are others, in fine, with whom regeneration has commenced so early, that it is blended in some sort with the development of their being, and it has followed step by step the corresponding stages of the natural life ; and these, we think, have been called to prove less than others the pangs of spiritual childbirth, and the contrast between the life of the world and the life of God. But despite these restrictions, and many others which could be made, it is certain that what we have said must be found, in some degree, in every soul really converted ; and that a man who should recognise in himself neither reconciliation with God, nor the progressive work of sanctification should entertain serious doubts as to his safety, and tremble for the state of his soul, lest he should not yet have been to any extent begotten in Christ by the Gospel.

A second reflection, which must be made, is that the Christian life, such as the Gospel presents it and such as grace

works it, does not admit of any relaxing, does not permit any standing still, does not authorise any halting, but supposes, on the contrary, an ascending movement, sustained progress, a growth and constant development. And just as in the order of nature an individual never remains longer than he should in the state of childhood or of youth without pining away physically, or without being besotted morally, so is it impossible for a man to droop spiritually without gravely injuring the work of his salvation. What! shall the life of nature stretch out by constant and immutable laws after a gradual development which is the essential condition of its existence; and should the life of grace, the life of love, the imperishable, the eternal life, be stationary? Far from us be that defective Christianity, in which people stop as soon as they have commenced to walk; where they grow tired of learning as soon as they have known the first rudiments of the truth; where they cease to fight when the struggle has been scarcely entered upon; where they cease to vegetate when the divine life has only appeared; where faith is shut up in forms, the service of God a vain profession; where from the day on which they declared for the truth, they have made but poor and wretched progress in regeneration of the heart and reformation of the life; and where are produced, to their own humiliation, much more of the remains of the old man than the features of the new man's character! Is it strange that such people, after having commenced in that fashion in the spirit, finish by the flesh! (Gal. iii., 3.) To such persons might be addressed Saint Paul's keen reproach to the Galatians: "Ye did run well, who then hath hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Gal. v., 7.) My brethren, let us never forget that a man proves himself a Christian by leaving the things which are behind and pressing forward towards those things which are before; running towards the mark, for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus. (Phil. iii., 14).

Our third reflection is to this effect: that just as there are between childhood and youth, and between youth and mature age, two intermediate states which it would have been too long and too difficult to describe, and which are neither the one nor the other of these ages, or rather which are connected with all of them at once, so is childhood in Christ preceded by something which is not it, and which yet is the commencement, the preliminary step to it: it is the preparatory labour of the new birth. Soon there is the awakened conscience, and the feeling of guilt becomes poignant; soon there is the nothingness of the world and the desire to approach God, who makes Himself felt in the soul. Here, there is a trial which has broken the heart and predisposed it to open itself to the Gospel; there, are heard the secret calls of grace which have been followed by meditation and serious searchings to find the truth. To these persons, shaken, awakened, wrought upon, but who are neither children nor young men, still less perfect men in Christ Jesus, we must say on the one hand, for their encouragement: "You are not far from the kingdom of heaven;" you are touching the threshold of the Church; God calls you, He intends your conversion, He loves your souls, and you ought to see in these first outlines of the work of grace His design to save you. But do not remain there, otherwise you will cause the work to miscarry which has been begun in you. You must give your heart to God. Take, with regard to salvation, a definite side; believe in the pardon which is offered to you; embrace, by faith, the Saviour, and decide to follow Him; in order that, being born to true life by the power of His Holy Spirit, you may see these fluctuations, these agitations, these troubles which have tormented you up till this moment come to an end, and that you may at last taste the peace, love and liberty which are the unfailing fruit of a sincere conversion to God by Christ.

We speak here of a new birth, of childhood in Christ, of

youth in grace, of ripe age according to the Spirit. Sublime and holy realities of the city of God ! But what a sad thought presents itself to our mind at the moment of concluding ! There are perhaps in this auditory persons altogether strangers to these things ; who not only have not the end, the perfection, the head-stone, but not even the first elements, the most simple sketch ; persons who have passed twenty, thirty, forty years, without having seen rise upon them that light of life which illuminates the mind and which revives the soul ; persons who have arrived at mature or even old age without having ever been children in the school of Jesus Christ ; persons who will die perhaps in this unhappy state, and on whose tomb might be engraved this epitaph : “ Here lies a man who lived without living, and who died without having been born.” “ Verily, verily, I say unto you,” saith the Lord, “ except a man be born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God.” (John iii., 3.) And if such a man do not see Thy kingdom, what shall he then see, O my God ? Thou Lord, to Whom alone it appertains, hath said : “ He shall see the outward darkness, and he shall have for his portion weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. viii., 12) Do Thou then Thyself alarm by this threatening all those to whom Thou seest that it is applicable, and snatch them out of their lethargy, in order that, opening their eyes to their wretchedness, and being terrified on the verge of the abyss into which they are about to fall, they may cry to Thee, and Thou mayest save them as Thou hast saved so many others, as Thou hast saved us, even us who were lost. Amen !





THE DEGREES OF CHRISTIANITY.

By DR. CH. L. E. LUTHARDT, *Pastor, &c., Leipsig.*

“And John answered him, saying, Master we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us : and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.”—Mark ix., 38-41.

BELOVED brethren in the Lord! We gladly cherish the scriptural hope that there will yet be a time when on all the heights of the earth the cross will stand, and every knee will bend to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is said of earthly love that, when true, it overcomes at last and is felt at last, but what love is equal to the Saviour's love. We should have no difficulty in believing that He who was lifted on the cross must draw everyone to Him. But it almost seems as if in this vital matter the general law of the soul's life had lost its force and its value. It is true that we sometimes sing :

“I rest with thee, Lord ! whither should I go ?
I feel so blessed within thy home of love !
The blessings purchased by thy pain and woe,
To thy poor child thou sendest from above.
O never let thy grace depart from me,
So shall I still abide, my Lord, with thee.”

But it is not less true that often we forget Him, that often the sweet sound of His name is not heard among us, and we well understand how that happens. For what would appear inconceivable in itself is but too conceivable for us. Do we not walk for weeks, cold, languid, and dead in our hearts; prayers indeed in our mouth, but mere formalism; our hands full of work, our heads full of thought, our souls full of heaviness; but with all that far from the Lord, as if we knew nothing of Him or had experienced nothing of His grace? Now it is this which above all things shows us our deep sinful corruption. It is true that the world is a world of ingratitude—history is full of examples,—but what is all ingratitude taken together in comparison with that ingratitude? Our hearts always ought to mourn over it.

I do not speak of those whose mischievous mouths are not afraid of speaking blasphemous words against that holy and august Name, before which all the blessed spirits adoringly bend. We will leave those alone. What I mean is, the coldness of our hearts, the indifference of our minds towards Him to whom we owe everything. But that, is—you know it yourselves—the prevailing character of professing Christians. And yet it is the surrender of the heart to Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, in the faith, which makes us the children of God by justification, and the new birth of the Holy Spirit which alone constitutes us Christians.

It is by that distinction that the word of God sharply separates those who are in a state of grace from those who are not,—the children of God from the children of this world. It is not merely a gradual difference of more or less piety; it is a difference which touches the core of Christian character, and in the deepest ground divides men into two classes. It is not merely a difference like that between two pilgrims, who on the same way, trying to obtain the same end, are nearer to it or farther from it, but it is the difference of two men who

are walking on quite different paths, and are separated from each other by a great gulf, in the depths of which the terrors of God's judgment are threatening, and over which no bridge leads, except on the wings of divine grace.

But are the two provinces, the life of regeneration and of natural life, and those who belong to these provinces, simply separated from each other? Are they not also connected, and and is there no relation between them? Does the word of God simply divide into these two parts, and does God not draw over threads on this side and that, by which He links them together? It is one of the most difficult tasks of Christian judgment, properly to unite both with each other, and to point out the right division and the right connection of these two provinces. Two words of the Lord are transmitted to us on this subject, and it is our task so to understand each that it does not exclude the other. The one runs thus, "He that is not with Me is against Me;" but the other, "He that is not against us is on our part." To be sure, he of whom we cannot say more than that he is not exactly against Jesus, is not yet a Christian in truth. Only he who is with Him, and owns Him with faith and love of heart, is a Christian. And yet the Lord does not separate entirely those from Him of whom we can only say that they are not against Him. He puts them into a connection, into a relation with His cause and Church,—“He that is not against us is on our part.” We may therefore be permitted to say, there are degrees of Christianity, and our text invites us to speak of them.

I. THE DEGREE OF SERVICE.

II. THE DEGREE OF COMMUNION.

Each of these degrees is a twofold one: the service is serving the cause and serving the disciples of Jesus; and the communion is the communion with the heart and communion with the work of Jesus.

I. The degree of service, that is of serving the cause of Jesus Christ, is presented to us by the narration of our text and by the word of the Lord, "He that is not against us is on our part."

Immediately before, the Lord had spoken of that filial humility, which is precious in His eyes, and which ought also to be precious in His disciples' eyes, when John asked Him about that man who cast out devils without following them. The apostle has often been blamed on account of this question, as if it proceeded from that narrow-mindedness which only recognises those as Christians who are of its own communion, and some have considered the Lord's answer as a reproof and as stating that one can be a very good Christian without belonging to any religious denomination. But that is not the Lord's meaning. Having taught His disciples how they must acknowledge each other, He teaches them also how they must likewise acknowledge those who are standing at a distance, and not prohibit any who are not against Him. St. John's question is, therefore, How far must we acknowledge those and the doings of those who do not belong to the disciples of Jesus Christ, and yet are not against Jesus? To which the Lord answers, that we must let them alone, seeing they are serving His cause. "He that is not against us is on our part." There are degrees of service in serving the cause of Jesus Christ.

That man, of whom St. John tells us in our text that he had cast out devils in Jesus's name, was mightily stimulated by the appearance of Jesus and His wonderful works. He was no disciple of Jesus, for how could he else have taken his own way, if in his heart he truly belonged to Jesus? His heart was far from Jesus, but his understanding perceived the importance of Jesus, and he believed in the power of His name which he had often experienced. Hence each cure which he performed in the name of Jesus was subservient to the glorifying of His

name, and to the promotion of His cause. Thus he was a servant, though not a child, of God : in Jesus's service, but not in His communion.

Now this is our example, and the word of Jesus Christ has been written for our learning. The name of the Lord exercises an overwhelming authority and an irresistible power even upon those who in their heart are far from Him. The prophets foretold a time when even on the vessels of daily life "Holiness unto the Lord" shall be written, as if they were vessels consecrated to the sacred service of the temple. This is a prophecy that even on the things of natural life Christianity has put its seal and has marked them with the holy name which they are to serve. These things of natural life, human law, the state, civil society, sciences and arts, and whatever else may be of that kind, are not thereby become Christianised in the proper sense of that word ; and yet we call them Christian, for Christianity has put its seal to them, and it may be said of them "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is on our part." They are in the service of the cause of Jesus.

The nations have experienced the blessed power of the name of Jesus Christ ; therefore they have put His name at the head of all the names which are remembered in the course of each year, and have thus received the Christian confession into the order of natural life. Everything has experienced the Christian spirit and received its seal ; yet when the masses, even whole nations, entered into the Christian church, when Christianity became the religion of the state, and its confession was required by the temporal authority, the hearts of the people generally were not thereby suddenly changed, nor had men thereby become true Christians and children of God ; Christianity had only become the law of public life, and so far the world had ceased to be at enmity against the cause and the Church of Jesus Christ. "He that is not against us is on our part."

No one can mistake the rich blessing which this outward authority of Christianity has procured to the world, and the furtherance which it has brought to the cause of Christ. There are dismal powers dwelling and lurking in the heart and in the deep recesses of human life, which at once stir and break forth, when Christian discipline and order, by which they are bound and fettered, are done away. The outward authority of the name of Christ, the outward Christian discipline, does not constitute us Christians and does not procure us heaven, and he deceives himself who relies on it ; but it serves to check the dark powers who threaten the existence of every Christian institution, and to further the cause of Christ and to help the Church in her work of winning souls. "He that is not against us is on our part."

That is the blessing of the outward Christian order. Therefore the spirit of the world uses much pains and diligence to upset it, to make way for the dark spiritual powers. Christians ought not therefore to speak disparagingly of outward Christianity, or call it mere appearance or hypocrisy. True it is only an outward use of the name of Jesus, and those who use it may often be very far from Jesus in their heart and not follow Him. Still it is an acknowledging of His name and a serving of His cause. "Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part."

But, my dear Christian brethren, one can do miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, and yet not belong to Him. That is told us at the same time as a warning to all those who in any way serve the cause of Christ or further the tasks or interests of the kingdom of God. It is especially told us, who have to proclaim His word, and to teach the mysteries of His saving truth. One can be a mighty preacher, a man of much prayer, a great divine—one can abundantly work, produce great effects, and have much success,—and yet be lost.

“Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Here is the danger of deceiving one’s self. We may use the powers which the Lord has given us for working, and at the same time overlook that our heart is estranged or has been estranged from Him. When the point in question is our adoption and salvation, then we must be *for* Him. But he already serves Him who is not exactly against Him and His cause. That is the first degree, the degree of serving His cause.

But serving His believing people has a higher value. “Who-soever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you he shall not lose his reward.” We may serve the cause of Jesus, even when we wish to have nothing to do with believers and cannot suffer “*pietists*,” as they are called, but this is a temptation to which we all are exposed, even those who not only have at heart His cause, but love the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Looking at the imperfect and pitiful form in which Christianity in believers often appears, we overlook the work which Jesus has begun in them, and suffer our displeasure at the crippled state of their Christianity to be greater than our joy that the Spirit of Jesus has His work in them, and that behind all the spots and wrinkles a child of God is hidden who at last will break through the earthly envelope and will shine in the brightness of heaven. For that is just the particular character of Christianity within us all, that Christ even now has no desirable beauty in His people. There is often met with in the world a perfection of natural beauty and an accomplishment of humanity which in the same degree is ordinarily not found in Christians. Even amongst the children of God we often meet with much more imperfection, contra-

diction, and deficiency than in the world, where character, in a much higher degree appears to be finished and complete. But this natural perfection of humanity, while it has its reward, belongs only to the present and becomes a prey to corruption and death; while in the weak flesh of the Christian dwells a new life which is of God, now only poorly shining through the earthly tabernacle, but inwardly full of heavenly beauty, and one day to shine in the eternal glory of perfection. "I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me." And in anticipation of their future glory, the children of God can sing :

"What shall I be? When days of grief are ended,
From earthly fetters set for ever free;
When from the harps of saints and angels blended,
I hear the burst of joyful melody!
What shall I be? Ah, how the streaming light
Can lend a brightness to this dreary night!"

However, nobody has an eye for this hidden beauty, but he who in the spirit perceives the beauty of Jesus, and nobody has a hearty love for the poor saints of Jesus but he who in love has shut up the Lord Jesus in his heart. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

The Lord does not speak of friendly services such as man renders to man from natural sympathy, but of the service rendered to His disciples, and rendered to them because they are His disciples. "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in *my name*, because *ye belong to CHRIST*." A cup of water is the smallest gift, but yet a friendly service rendered to those who are standing in the heat of the labour for Jesus's kingdom, or in the heat of affliction. The time of

labour is chiefly now, the time of affliction will chiefly be at the end. Nothing that has been rendered to Him in this or that time will the Lord leave without its reward. But it must be rendered without false designs and in the simplicity of the mind, "because ye belong to Christ." "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink, —inherit the kingdom." Even Gibeonites and drawers of water enter into the kingdom of God.

Such a serving of the saints is not without communion with Jesus in faith and love.

II.—That is the other degree. *The degree of communion, of communion of heart.* For communion of the heart with Jesus is that, and that only, which constitutes the disciple of Jesus the Christian. "Because he followeth not us," St. John lays particular stress on that word, and wants to say thereby that he missed the principal article of Christianity in that stranger, that is communion with Jesus Christ. St. John himself has given a very exact description of that decisive hour of his own life, in which in faith and love he became a disciple of Jesus (John i., 37), and we clearly perceive from the narrative in his Gospel how gratefully he treasured in his soul the remembrance of that hour. Forty days had passed from the baptism of Jesus, during which time the Lord had endured the temptations of the wilderness, and proved and confirmed Himself the holy servant of God, despising the easy way to obtain the dominion of the world, and choosing instead the way of the cross. And when He returned from the wilderness and the temptation, the first word with which the Baptist greeted Him, was "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And on the following day again he had nothing else to say to his disciples but that same word, "Behold the Lamb of God." And that word brought John to Jesus.

My beloved brethren, there are many things which we find and win in Jesus—wisdom holiness, glory—but what we have to seek in Him, in the first place, is the pardon of our sins ; what we have to see in Him is the Lamb of God which takes away our sins. Then all other things will be added to us. He who otherwise comes to Him, he who seeks and sees other things in Him, seeks and sees perhaps some particular beauty in Him, some gifts of His rich treasure ; but Himself, His heart, and what He is for us, he does not see and find ; and that which he finds remains for him a doubtful gain, which may easily be lost, because only with some particular powers and parts of his being he has laid hold of some particular sides and gifts of Jesus, but has not looked into His eyes, has not dealt with Him face to face, person to person, has not his heart joined with Jesus's heart. “Behold the Lamb of God.” That is the first annunciation and designation of Jesus Christ, which St. John heard from the Baptist, that is the highest praise of Jesus which the opened ear of John heard in the great revelation at Patmos from the hosts of heavenly spirits (Rev. v., 12). That is the word which must touch our souls, and must sink into the susceptible ground of our hearts as the seed of faith and love. Then, as St. John experienced it, the quiet majesty of the face of Jesus comes to meet us in all the greatness and power of its glorious loveliness, and shines with full brilliancy on us, like the light of the sun. St. John asks Him, “Where dwellest thou?” and Jesus answers, “Come and see.” We must come and see where He dwells, we must remain with Him in prayer. This first prayer in which seeking and finding, questioning and answering, joy and grief are wonderfully mixed—that is decisive. And how calm is it in His dwelling-place ! There the noise of the day is hushed, there all the uneasiness of our heart subsides, and His peace takes hold of us. And he who has thus found Him dwelleth in Him, and is at home in His house, and

sits at His table, and goes to seek others and to tell them we have found the Saviour.

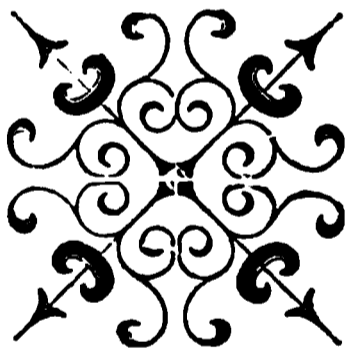
That is the communion with Jesus, the following of Jesus, as St. John narrates it of himself, for our example and stimulation. That is his meaning when he tells Jesus of one "who followeth not us."

But that is not all. That man of whom St. John speaks exercised an activity which had a certain resemblance to the working of the apostles. Thus St. John did not only recognise an imitation of Jesus Christ in faith and love, but also in good works, not only a communion of the heart, but also of the life. He thought of this not less when he spoke that word. And though we be no apostles, and though we are not all ministers of the Gospel, we yet have all a share in the one great work of helping to build up and hasten the full glory of the kingdom of Christ. But our entering into that communion of working with Jesus is only effected by prayer, by His prayer and by ours. In prayer the Lord spent the night before He chose the twelve; and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, by which they were fitted for their apostolic vocation, was an answering and an effect of the prayer of Jesus Christ when exalted to the right hand of God; for He had told them while on earth, "I will pray the Father and He will send you the Comforter to abide with you for ever." In the communion of the love of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit begins every prayer, and we carry it out in the words of our lips. That prayer sends down upon us the fulness of the Spirit while our prayer plunges us into the depth of the divine spiritual life, that we may emerge from it filled with the powers of a higher world.

Therein the communion with Jesus Christ is finished.

My dear brethren, each beginning of a week is a new beginning of work. Let us be careful, and may the Lord

and His Spirit grant that, while busily working and labouring, we may not neglect and lose the one thing that we chiefly, and in the main only, want—the communion of the heart with Jesus the Saviour of sinners; and may our occupation with the mysteries of His name and the riches of His revelation not be for us the mere service of a slave, but the blessed work of the children of God and the blessed course of His followers! Amen.





THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.

By Dr. J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNÉ.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—GAL. vi., 14.

MY brethren, God has not intended that men should be deprived of all boasting. A disposition to boast is one of the propensities most peculiar to our nature, and which we find in all classes of society and among all varieties of the human race. From him who stands on the highest elevation in the world down to the most unknown; from the inhabitant of our cities, whose spirit towers on high, down to the very savage, whose reason is scarcely observable; all find something of which they believe that they may boast.—And what is it then?—A ridiculous plaything, of which they should blush, instead of making it the object of their pride. Oh! sad spectacle of our vanity, which proves with the greatest precision that the human race has lost that in which it could glory, that it has come short of the glory of God (Rom. iii., 23); and that in this great need it stretches out its hand to the first plaything that it finds to put it in the place of the reality which it wants. Thus the inhabitant of a city in the utmost state of famine seizes with desire the loathsome food, from the very sight of which at another time all his senses would have revolted.

God would give men an object in which they could better glory. He has given them the cross of Jesus Christ.

“*God forbid that I should glory,*” says St. Paul in our text, “*save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” And through these words he pronounces the sentence of condemnation against all deceitful things, which are in general our idols; he commands all men to cease from their vain endeavours, and he exalts the cross of Jesus Christ, as the only object worth glorying in for all intelligent beings till the end of time. But when the apostle says *in the cross of Christ*, think not that he understands thereby the wood, the outward sign, the figure with which one meets so frequently in many regions of Christendom, and which has been so often abused by superstition. He intends to denote thereby the death of the Son of God, which took place when the fulness of the time was come for the remission of our sins. But he uses the expression *the cross* only to remind us that this kind of death was held as accursed among all people, that the death in which we ought to glory was full of humiliation, shame, and ignominy, and even accursed of God. (Gal. iii., 13.)

See then here, my brethren, the *glorying* which God your Creator allows you, and which He Himself would give you. The day which we now commemorate is the only ground of greatness which can be within the reach of the human race.* Never would man have been really able to glory if the hill of Calvary had not 1800 years ago displayed the spectacle which we see on it; if man had not there crucified this Jesus, who had previously been sent by Pilate to Herod and by Herod to Pilate; if He had not been there suspended on the tree, “a reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Ps. xxii., 6); and if the terrible sentence had not fallen on the only innocent head that ever lived on earth. This is the day on which the great contest was engaged in, on which the great deed was finished which won for us honour and immor-

* This sermon was preached on a Good Friday.

talities. This is the day on which our eternal nobility was registered in the book of life.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let the present meditation be devoted to the examination of this new object of glorying.

There are two opinions concerning this object: one is the apostle's; we will support it. The other is the world's; we will refute it. Or, we will first state the dignity of the cross of Christ, and then test our feelings thereby. When we have defended the truth and combatted error, our work is done.

And do Thou, Lord our God, what Thou hast to do! Give the beginning and the end, and thus all. Show us how in the cross of Jesus Christ there is hidden all the wisdom of God and all the power of God! Amen.

I.—THE OPINION OF THE APOSTLE.

The Apostle of the Gentiles proclaims, as we have seen, the cross of Jesus Christ as the only object of his boasting. And the first reason which moved him to do so is certainly this, that he sees in the cross the mind and glory of God developed in their full splendour. St. Paul had learnt to know God in his early years; but the zeal which impelled him before his conversion so violently to persecute the disciples of the Nazarene, shows sufficiently of what nature this knowledge was. The cross of Jesus Christ had now been revealed to him, and it made him acquainted with a God of whom he had learnt nothing in the school of Gamaliel, and he boasts of that to which he owed this wonderful knowledge. Yes, this cross is the only teacher which reveals to us the living God. If we even exhaust our knowledge, we shall not truly know God if the cross of Jesus Christ have given us no instruction. Without it even nature and conscience speak in dark sayings, and what is most important for us to know remains veiled

from our eyes. Where will you come to the knowledge of God's *holiness*, His unutterable abhorrence of sin, which gives you such earnest warnings? Conscience says something to you; but if you would have quite a different idea of it, come to the cross of Jesus Christ—see Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, fastened to the cross *on account of sin*, and because unrighteousness dwells on the earth. Will you then still retain unsettled views of the holiness of God? Will you still doubt whether God has given the world a telling proof of his holiness?

Where will you arrive at the knowledge of God's *love*, this infinite mercy which should be the ground of all your joy? Nature will teach you something here also; but if you would hear this subject spoken of with power, concerning which nature seems only to stammer, hasten to the cross of Jesus Christ; see the well-beloved Son of the Father humble Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, that the world might have life. Is that not a deed of love? "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v., 7, 8.)

Where will you discover the *glory* of God? What is the place, O my Lord and my God! where I can find Thee in all Thy glory? Shall I seek Thee in the midst of the worlds which Thou hast formed, or in an inaccessible light, surrounded afar off by all the angels bowing their heads to the ground? I can find no spot in the whole universe which would answer to Thy glory. Everything is so little in comparison with Thee, everything is so small side by side with Thy infinity! But no; I know a spot which answers to all Thy glory, and this is an accursed tree, on which Thou art fastened. There I recognise Thee in all Thy sublimity, much more than when surrounded by those thousands of thousands

who form the guard of Thy throne. (Dan. vii., 10.) All these ideas of angels, archangels, and cherubim, which bow their heads before Thee are but slight representations, borrowed from what man calls greatness ; but O Thou who wast fastened on a cross for our sin ! Thy glory is infinite. I see therein not even the slightest human feature ; Thou hast there a splendour altogether peculiar to Thee ; Thou appearest in a thoroughly divine light. Oh ! I envy not the angels and archangels who declare to Thee their unworthiness when Thou sittest on Thy heavenly throne. To *us men* is it given to worship Thee on a far more glorious throne—Thy cross. They forsook the heavens when Thou wast fastened on the cross, because the earth presented to them a spectacle which had never been seen in heaven. Only and solely at the foot of this cross will I linger, recognising Thee, and making my boast—“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But St. Paul glories in the cross of Christ not only because it reveals to him the glory of God, but also *because it causes him to see his own wretchedness*. What must man's state be, when *such* a deed has to be accomplished in order to free him from it ? Certainly there are voices enough as well outside of us as in us to remind us of our nothingness ; but how skillfully we can reason away their decisions and withdraw ourselves from their judgments ! In what a deceitful righteousness does man wrap himself up as long as the cross of Christ is a strange thing to him ; on what a height he places himself until the cross abases him ! The cross of Jesus Christ is the great writing of accusation which God hath set forth before the eyes of the whole earth. No one can fix his eyes on it without being at the same moment convinced. It is truly foolishness for a man to believe himself still guiltless, since the Son of God was offered up for his sin. Come, my brethren, for the cross of Jesus Christ shows you the wounds of your

soul ; it reveals to you your entire desert of condemnation, teaches you the entire extent of your sin, and extinguishes in you the very last spark of pride.

O thou who thinkest thou dost still possess so great worthiness in the sight of God, come, in order to have this idea destroyed, to the cross of Christ ; come there in order to be able to know thine own deserts ; the Son of God was obliged to shed His blood there in order to save thee from death. O thou who boastest in thy virtues, come and consider them a little in the light of this Cross, there they will pale away, there they will become obscured, and thou wilt find them all infected with a selfishness and with a pride which make them objects of the divine abhorrence. Let even the most excellent of men approach ; I place him at the foot of that cross which was erected even for his salvation, and what will then become of his pride ? The cross breaks in pieces this deceitful glass through which we look upon ourselves as greater than we are ; it annihilates us. And why then does St. Paul glory in it ? Because he knows that in his state *the sense of his wretchedness* is his highest dignity. And to us, my brethren, it is not allowed to have another boast than that of the Apostle ; none of us will be great before God if we have not felt our own nothingness before Him. Oh ! blessed be this cross which has assigned us our right place, and which causes us to find in the feeling of our nothingness the commencement of our glory.

But when Paul glories in the cross of Christ because it had hurled him down from his vain greatness, he boasts also chiefly of it *because it raises him to true greatness*. The great object of his glorying is that such a price has been paid for the salvation of his soul, that the Son of God died even for the sin which he committed, that the blood shed on the cross made a full atonement for all his guilt, and procured for him immortality. And what, my dear hearer, is thy glory if not

the forgiveness of sins? How wouldst thou lift up thy head if **ONE** had not died for thee, if *He* who died for thee were not He who made all things, and who preserves all things by the word of His power (2 Cor. v., 14; John i., 3; Col. i., 16, 17; Heb. i., 2, 3, 10). Thou exertest thyself to draw glory and honour out of the smallest offering which a dying man brings to thee, and out of the smallest trouble which he puts himself to on thy account; and wilt thou not glory in this, that the Lord of all things, having appeared in flesh, has shed His blood on the cross for thee? It was not on account of His own sins that He was pierced, for "I find no fault in Him," said even His judge. (John xix., 4.) The power of men was not the cause of His death; for could He not have prayed His Father to send Him more than twelve legions of angels. (Matt. xxvi., 53.) Why was He then fastened on the cross. It was necessary *on thy account*, my dear brother: this is the only way of accounting for it that is left to us.

Yes, the only cause which slew the Son of the living God on the cross was the love which He had for thy soul, the determination which He had formed to save thee. If He carried out His intention, if pain did not cause Him to waver, if He did not shun the terrible hour: it was all in order to save thy soul. If He shed all His blood for thee, if He had to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" if He endured an anguish of heart, which far exceeds our ideas: the only cause was the salvation of thy soul. If He fought out on the cross a great conflict, if He overcame sin, the world, death, and hell: He did it to win thy soul.

He died—all is accomplished. He has cancelled with His own blood the debt which thou couldst never have paid; thou art reconciled; thy offences are taken away; He is now, for all them that obey Him, the *Author of eternal salvation*. (Heb.

v., 9.) O wonderful death of the only Son of the Father ! An event which will ever be unique in the history of the world ! Unsearchable depth of Deity, before which the angels bow their heads to the earth, without being able to sound its depths ! And shouldst thou, my brother, for whom this took place, shouldst thou be the only one whom it did not move ? Shouldst thou alone draw no glory from it ? What more wonderful event than this could proceed from heaven to earth ? At what price wouldst thou be redeemed if this, which has been paid, does not suffice for thee ? How high dost thou place thyself if thou slightest the blood of the world's King ? What kind of a gift wouldst thou receive if an eternity of glory has so little value for thee ? Oh ! when thou wilt stand before the judgment-seat of God, and when the eye of the Judge will examine the transgression of thy soul, oh ! what will be then thy hope ? What will be then thy glory ? What can then calm thy heart if thou canst not then say, in presence of the Judge and of all those who stand before Him : " Christ died for my sins." (1 Cor. xv., 3.) Yes, my brethren, only the unbeliever can fix his eye on this cross without finding there his glory, because it has, indeed, none for him ; but the believer discovers therein an infinite glory. My Lord and Saviour, it is truly so, the lower Thy cross is, the more we glory in it ; for what must that dignity be which is shown to us through such an humbling, what must that glory be which is promised to us by such an abasement ?

But observe especially the ground which the Apostle himself presents : God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* That is, indeed, an exceedingly great advantage which the cross of Jesus Christ bestows ; for therein consists the great wretchedness of man, that he cannot free himself from the present world, to become a citizen

of the future one; and the cross of Jesus Christ works this miracle. It crucifies man to the world, and the world to man. What an expression of power! It crucifies you to the world, that is, it crucifies the sin in you which causes you to live for the world. Should you not hate sin, knowing that Christ died on account of sin? Will you not fight against all the motions which it begets in your heart? Yes, the Redeemer's death is the only means of infusing into us a lively hatred of our sinful nature. It is the only medicine for our wounds. But what is still more, the Cross of Jesus Christ will crucify the world to you, that is it will annihilate all allurements to the vanities of the world. You cannot love Christ and the world at the same time. What can the pageantry of the present world be worth to him for whom the Cross of Christ has won all the treasures of the world to come? Will he not hate the world violently; for if sin was the cause of his Redeemer's death, the world with its passions and excesses was the instrument! The cross crucifying man to this world makes him a citizen of the world to come; killing in him the old man of this earth, it forms the new man which is of heaven. Where Christ is, there is also his treasure and his heart; he is *risen with Christ*. (Col. iii., 1.) In this manner the cross works the great change which man needed, and makes him, whom it found in the dust, a citizen of heaven. In this manner the cross accomplishes through its power what no law or human wisdom could perform. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

But the last motive which moved St. Paul, as he travelled through Asia, Greece, and Italy, and passed over all seas, to cry out that he desired to glory in nothing else, was certainly *the thought of the power of this cross and the triumphs which await it*. This great apostle knew that it is sufficient to bestow immortality even on those who have already sunk into the

deepest abyss. He knew what a large number it had already redeemed as well in the cities of Galatia to which he wrote, as those in Greece, and at Rome, and Jerusalem. He knew the future destiny of the cross : that kings and people would come and cast themselves down before it ; that the nations would bring their sons in their arms ; and that all the ends of the earth would become its inheritance. (Is. xlix., 22.) And we can see that in part fulfilled, which the apostle could only foreknow. This unknown cross has raised itself from Calvary, and rules already over half of the earth. The prediction of Him who was fastened on it has not ceased to be fulfilled : “ And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John xii., 32.) How many millions of souls in so many centuries have fixed their gaze upon it, as the Israelites of old did on the brazen serpent, and been saved (Num. xxi., 5—9) ; what a great multitude, won out of the kingdom of darkness, celebrate now, before the throne, the salvation that has come to them through the Lamb. (Rev. vii., 9, 10.) All old things have passed away, and everything has become new. A new breath of life has floated around this orb for 1800 years. The cross of Jesus Christ has already conquered multitudes of adversaries ; slavery, barbarism, and effeminacy have been obliged to give way before it ; for in saving individuals it becomes the true power of nations. It accomplishes in its progress the redemption of the world ; the powers of darkness fly before it, and let go their hold of us ; at the same time, struggling with superstition which is bent on putting human wretchedness in its place or close by it, and with unbelief which is bent on annihilating it, and which would make men believe that heaven has not opened to save the earth ; struggling with these, it directs its blows right and left against those abominable enemies. Not content with extending its old conquests, it hastens through the midst of the heavens to carry on the work of regeneration. It is the

standard which the Lord of Hosts set up to the people. (Is. xlix., 22.) Its victories multiply ; it assembles men from all sides, whose dispersion was caused by their sins ; and we, trusting on its almighty power, can espy the time when it will be said : Now is the whole world our God's and His Christ's. Oh ! God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the world tread thee even under its feet, thou art nevertheless that by which it is saved. A drop of Thy blood, O Lord, is more precious to us than all the riches of the universe.

II.—THE OPINION OF THE WORLD.

Is this your language, my brethren ? If that is the opinion of St. Paul, what is yours ? There is scarcely a truth which could have more opponents in the world than this, about which our text speaks to us. How many are there who practically say, I glory in all other things than in the Cross of Jesus Christ. Are ye of this number ? Oh, that your conscience testified to you on this day, the day of triumph for the cross, that you yourselves, since you entered this sacred house, and commenced to lend me your attention, have neither in your understanding nor in your heart cherished feelings or thoughts which are opposed to those of St. Paul !

Perhaps you say :—Is it then necessary, to think so much about this cross ? There are so many other objects in religion which are much more important than this ! More important than the cross ? I could here point you back to what I have just now said, but I prefer to refute you by means of yourself. You would set the cross aside as a thing of small account, and yet you say almost at the same moment this cross, this atoning death of the only begotten Son of God is incomprehensible, and our reason is thereby brought to nought. How are

such opinions to be reconciled? How can the cross be considered at the same time so insignificant and yet so wonderful? If it thus surpasses your ideas, whence comes the low value which you assign to it? This must be made clear to you. The cross of the Son of God cannot exist and yet be insignificant; it is either credible or a lie. If it is deserving of credit and true, it is the greatest thing in the world, and you must come and recognise it, and in spirit bow before it. If it is false and a lie, you must declare it to be the greatest of all cheats, with all our sacred books which proclaim it, and with the whole of Christianity of which it is the substance. You must, like the first apostates of the Church, trample it under your feet, and then swear by the gods of the world. One of the two the cross must be to you, either divine wisdom or hellish lies. It must either be your ruin or your salvation. There is no middle way: you cannot be indifferent about it.

But that is just what holds us back from it you will say. If the cross is true, all other things fall at once, and we can then seek our glory only in Him. But is it true? Is it true that the Son of God shed his blood on the tree to procure for us eternal life? Yes, my brethren, and the witness which should convince us is God Himself, who is the truth, and who, through His apostle (Eph. ii., 16), declares that Jesus Christ reconciled both in one body by the cross. But without seeking testimony in heaven, will not the earth itself suffice for us? Call back to remembrance the greatest deeds of antiquity, there is no longer any trace of them in existence, and only the old historical books which relate them to us bear testimony that they have taken place. But it is not so with the atoning death of Christ: this event lives in the world. The present condition of the earth gives evidence of it. From the blood which flowed down from the height of the cross, all the nations have proceeded which have exalted this holy banner

upon the earth which they rule. Everything in these nations speaks to you of the cross. Yes, the cross of Christ is beyond your reach, you cannot shatter it. This truth, on which eighteen centuries rest, cannot so easily be set aside, as if it were a short-lived dogma, which has been formed in the brain of him who preaches it. Opposed in all ages, and by all the power of men, it has nevertheless permeated all times without having been cast down. It has expressed itself by its own power, both against unbelief and against superstition. And this fact of an offering which once was finished for the sin of all is ever present in the world, and proclaimed as the greatest act of love to men.

But could such an act have taken place? What astonishment does this doctrine cause us! What can we especially discover in it, if it is not foolishness? My brethren, let us not ask whether such a deed could have been completed when we know that it did take place. To investigate whether what has actually happened could have taken place is a ridiculous play of men of reason; and those must keep silence when the cross of the Son of God is spoken of. You are astonished, you say. But according to what rules, then, should the plummet of your understanding search the depths of Deity? If God, in giving life to a plant, does something which surprises us, should we think that when He reconciles the world to Himself He should do nothing astonishing? Man is astounded at it, because he has never had an idea anything like it. In fine, know that God in this matter thinks as you do, and that He calls the cross *foolishness*. (1 Cor. i., 21.) But should we not learn from this that if we dare to contend with Him, what we called *wisdom* would be proved *foolishness*, and what we considered foolishness would be declared wisdom. A little of the foolishness of the cross is sufficient to put to shame all our philosophy. This cross, which alone reveals all God's attributes, and alone satisfies all man's wants, is the real *sum*

of the wisdom of the world. All buildings of human pride are thereby one after another annihilated. It has already rendered many defenceless, and will not cease to disarm others. He who is a stranger to it is mistaken, for a time will come when he will be astonished to have passed it by without paying attention to it; and when Christ, having spoiled the principalities and powers of human wisdom, which still rule in the present century, and having made a show of them openly, will triumph over them Himself in this cross. (Col. ii., 15.)

But if this cross of Christ is not now your glory and your wisdom, what are you then? To what religion do you then belong? Are you Christians? Christians without the cross! What a new Christianity is that, in what school is it taught? Verily, you can even learn from unbelievers what you do not seem to know. Go to the children of Israel, make your way to a follower of the false prophet; ask one of them what the Christianity is which you profess. Certainly he who does not believe, but for that very reason is free from prejudice, will tell you. He will say that Christians are a people who recognise Jesus of Nazareth born at Bethlehem as the only begotten Son of God, and believe that the death which He suffered under Pontius Pilate is the sacrifice which reconciles the sinful and rebellious human race to God! Do you then not know your religion even so well as those who live without it? They abuse this cross of Jesus, they who do not pretend to believe in it; and you who publicly confess it, you are ashamed of it, like them! Not to glory in the cross, is not to belong to the Christian church. We see in every century all those who have followed the steps of St. Paul, and whose names are noted down in the Book of Life, glorying in the cross. In it the heroes of the Reformation especially gloried, whom we honour as our fathers in the faith. God keep you from being able to turn away from their example, and from glory-

ing in anything else than in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ !

Ah, my brethren, shall we say why you do not glory in it alone? *Because you believe that you do not need it.* And that is just the last point to which everything comes back. We seize with joy a help which we consider necessary, but we despise it as soon as we believe that it is unnecessary. The cross of Jesus Christ professes to be what alone can give eternal salvation ; but you believe you are able to secure it through yourself. The cross of Jesus Christ professes to be what alone can give holiness ; but you imagine you are able to attain to it of yourself. What have you then still to do with it? If you reject it, that appears to me intelligible. The question is just this, Which is right, the cross of Jesus Christ which places salvation in itself, or you who seek it in yourself? This is the question which, if not soon decided in your case, *that day* will answer which will determine and reveal all things.

But you say, perhaps, and certainly there are many who can say it : "I deny not the cross of Christ." Quite true, you believe it, but only the half of it. You deny not the event, but you shun it. You venture not with a full and free faith to persuade yourself that the Son of God was fastened on the tree for you ; and hence it comes that, in respect of influence on your heart, this event is nothing. Ah, cast far away from you this littleness of faith, give up this half Christianity which precipitates you into destruction. All Christianity in which the central point is not the crucified Messiah, to whom everything runs, and from whom everything proceeds, is a false Christianity. Why will you not believe as St. Paul believed? The cross of Jesus Christ is just as nigh to you as it was to him. I offer you the Christ who was crucified for you, just as St. Peter offered Him to those who had fastened Him on the cross. (Acts iii., 26). His blood is before your

eyes as it was before theirs ; you can wash yourself therein from your misdeeds just as clean as they could. Oh, what day calls you to this, if the present does not ? What moment would you choose, if not this solemn moment when the Son of God was slain on Golgotha for you ?

Yea, Lord and Saviour ! I raise myself this hour and approach Thy cross ! Thou didst bring there an offering for me ; I come and bring mine to Thee. I come, Lord, and strip myself of everything, and declare to Thee that there is nothing in the world of which I boast but only the cross, on which I see Thee fastened. At Thy feet I cast all my pretended greatness ; Thy cross eclipses and annihilates it. I offer up to Thee all in which I have heretofore gloried. I tread my righteousness under my feet ; because I know that what I called my righteousness was nothing but unrighteousness. I tread my holiness under my feet ; because I know that what I called holiness was nothing but shame. I tread my meritorious works under my feet ; because I know that among them there is not *one* to be found pure, and that those things by which I believed life could be merited, deserve for me only condemnation. There remains for me nothing, O Lord ! See me here as Thou wilt have me, see me in the dust, see me wretched, poor, blind, and naked before Thee. Give me Thy gold, purified in the fire, that I may be rich ! Give me the white robes of Thy righteousness, that I may clothe myself, and that the shame of my nakedness may not appear. (Rev. iii., 17, 18.) Oh ! Thy cross gives me again all that I have lost, and in a quite different degree. For me, my Lord ! for me Thou wast fastened on the cross. Thy blood, which Thou didst shed, is my peace ; I wash myself therein diligently from all spots ; it atones before my Judge for all my offences ; it brings me near to Him again ; it unites me with Him afresh ; it speaks better than the blood of Abel. (Heb. xii., 24.) Thy cross becomes my wisdom, my righteousness, my holiness,

my redemption. Behold, I am now rich, Lord ! I have found this ground of glorying which will open to me the gates of heaven and set me upon an eternal throne. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Ah ! how do all these bonds of unbelief now discover themselves to us which century after century have poured out their blasphemies against the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ! We fear them in no wise. We repeat it, to them : it is this cross, this crucified Lord, that we worship, and in whom we glory. Ah ! wretched and proud world ! Ah ! wisdom, greatness, and folly of this time ! We know that at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ thy reproach awaits us ! But, clothed with this reproach, we despise thy glory, we make a mock of thy splendour, and point with the finger at thy greatness. We esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. (Heb. xi., 26.) Every word of thy reproach is a title of honour to our glory, and crushing under our feet everything that can produce thy pride, we still repeat with the apostle : "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I have yet only a word to say to you : *Abide by this cross.* You have responded to our voice, you have come and placed yourselves at the foot of the cross of Christ ; give thanks to Him who has led you there ; but this is still not enough, you must not in future leave it ; nothing in the world should be able to separate you from it.

Abide by this cross. Lament there the time of your ignorance ; regret with a bitter pain every moment that you have lost through not discovering its power and glory. And having lived so many years in the world without it and without God, repeat, in the enjoyment of a present salvation, these words of one of His old servants : "I have too late come to a knowledge of Thee, I have too late come to love Thee."
(Augustine.)

Abide by this cross, because you find there true greatness ; sacrifice there all false glory ; sacrifice there with joy this pride, which is infused into you by the superiority of your mind or the knowledge which distinguishes you, or your envied reputation in society, or your worldly calling, or the riches that you are in possession of, or your course of life which exalts you above others, or the admiration which surrounds you, this splendour which is extended over you, or by the ridiculous praises which are presented to you. How can I reckon up all the sources of this childish pride which you have to sacrifice before the cross ?

Abide by this cross. Abide there in your trials. Take comfort ; the cross has rescued you, salvation is procured for you, eternal life awaits you ; not even all the storms of life united can sadden the peace which has been won for you. Yes, the view of the punishment which fell upon the Holy and Righteous One in your stead, will cause you to find the burden which you bear light. Rejoice to be led on the way of pain which led Jesus to glory.

Abide by this cross. And when sin is again stirred up in your flesh, when the world begins to entice you, and the fiend to spread his nets, when your soul has begun to reel like a drunken man, then consider Jesus, in order that the view of what He suffered for your sins may fill your soul with a holy horror of them, and kindle again in your heart the extinguished flames of love.

Abide by this cross. And even should everything unite against it, yea, should men afresh surround it, blaspheming and shaking their heads (Matt. xxvii., 39) ; then be this your glory, boldly to confess this cross before all ; " For whosoever shall confess Me before men," saith the Lord, " him will I confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven." (Matt. x., 32, 33.)

The day will come when the veil which still covers it will be entirely removed, and when its light and its glory will stream forth upon every one who has not been ashamed of it.

May God give us grace to be confessors of the cross of Christ in our lives. May God give us grace to become confessors of the cross of Christ in our death. "I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life," saith the Lord. (Rev. iii., 5.) Amen.





THE MILLENNIUM.

By the REV. HORACE MONOD, *Pastor, Marseilles.*

I.

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.—REV. xx., 1—6.



It is seldom that our sermons bear on the prophecies, and especially on the unfulfilled prophecies. Several reasons bind us to this reserve.

First, the study of unfulfilled prophecies has only a secondary importance, and is not essential to salvation. In order to be saved, it is necessary to know that Jesus is the Christ,

and that He died on the cross for our sins ; but it is *not* necessary to know precisely what will be the nature of that glorious reign of the Saviour, which is announced to us to take place in the last days. It is clearly the duty of ministers of the Gospel to cleave in their sermons rather to that which is essential than to that which is secondary, to the first coming of Christ rather than to His second coming.

Further, and just because they are not essential to salvation, the unfulfilled prophecies are wrapped up in a considerable amount of obscurity. All that is necessary in the teachings of the Bible to be known in order to be saved, is of a wonderful clearness, and could not, in the case of unbiassed minds, give rise to dissimilar interpretations. It is thus that every man who reads the Bible without prejudice cannot but find in it the divine mission of the Saviour, and His divine nature, the atonement for sin by His blood, the necessity of faith and of a change of heart by His Holy Spirit. But alongside of these teachings, clear because they are necessary, there are found others which, although possessing their relative importance, although affording a real interest, are nevertheless not essential to salvation ; and the Lord has not judged it fitting that those instructions should be presented to us with the same clearness as the first. The unaccomplished prophecies are of this number : they are obscure in many respects, and that very obscurity is one proof of divine wisdom. If the prophecies had been of such a clearness that by means of them we could have known the future as clearly as history makes us acquainted with the past, grave inconveniences would have been the result. That light thrown in advance on future events might so far have counteracted the action of those second causes, by which God intended to introduce their accomplishment, as to have been incompatible, perhaps, with the free enjoyment of human liberty. Further, if believers had thus been able, by means of the pro-

phesies, to read, as in an open book, the glorious scenes of the future, without doubt that magnificent view would have absorbed all their faculties, and drawn them away from the positive, practical, humble duties which they have to discharge at the present time. If, despite the obscurity of the prophecies, we see many Christians so misled by the study of them, so seduced by the interpretations more or less plausible which they assign to them, as to lose sight of the essentials of religion, the actual and pressing interests of the Gospel: what would it be if the prophecies were as clear as the Gospel itself?

This fact proves that the study of the prophecies is not without dangers, and that is another reason which should bind a person to devote himself to it only with moderation. Those who give themselves up too exclusively to this study are easily tempted to hand over to the back ground the great truths of the faith, in order to devote their chief interest to speculations, curious, perhaps, and often attractive; but nearly always without benefit to practical life, and sometimes even dangerous. A long list might be furnished of rash, and at times reckless, systems, which have taken their source in the too exclusive study of the prophecies. In the first ages of the Church, during the persecutions excited by the Roman emperors, many Christians were led astray by a false interpretation of the prophecies, and imagined that the reign of Christ was at hand—a reign of temporal enjoyment for the Church—and believed that the Millennium was come when Christianity ascended the throne of the Cæsars in the person of Constantine. The epoch of the Reformation which, by reviving the study of the Word of God, brought back attention to the prophecies, also saw aberrations not less baleful come to light. Certain men, by contemplating the glowing visions of the Apocalypse, desiring the accomplishment of the promises which they contain; impatient to hasten

the progress, too slow to their minds, of the truth ; persuaded that the glorious kingdom of Christ was ready to appear, imagined that they were called to cooperate directly in order to its coming, that they were themselves the chosen agents of God to accomplish prophecy ; and from one aberration to another they came at length to take up carnal and bloody arms, to found on earth a spiritual and divine kingdom. Such was the true origin of the excesses committed by the Anabaptists, and so keenly combatted by Luther. Later on, in England, various commentators on the prophecies applied the visions of the Apocalypse to contemporary events and persons, and proclaimed with the most rash assurance that the end of the sixteenth century was to be the epoch when the actual order of things would give place to the Saviour's glorious coming. It was so also at the end of the eighteenth century, during the general effervescence of mind occasioned by the French revolution. In general, the close of each century has nearly always given rise to prophetic systems which pretended to fix the Saviour's coming. It would be difficult to reckon up at how many different times it has already been announced that the anti-Christian powers would be destroyed, that the Millennium was about to commence, and that the personal reign of Jesus Christ was about to be established on earth ; to such a degree is it true, that men who are even most pious and best versed in the Scriptures, can only fall into error when they undertake to "determine the times and the seasons which the Father hath kept in His own hand." In times of political agitations some voices are always heard crying : "Behold here is Christ, or there He is !" But let us not forget that Christ Himself has warned us beforehand, and has told us : "Do not believe them." Let us not pretend to calculate with a vigorous precision, and above all let us not fix with a rash assurance that solemn epoch, the knowledge of which the Father has kept in His

own hand ; let us be content to wait with patience and with faith for that coming of Christ which is announced in Scripture, and prepare ourselves for it, not by surrendering ourselves to barren speculations, but by "working out our sanctification in the fear of God."

Nevertheless, it must not, my brethren, be inferred from what precedes that we absolutely condemn the study of the prophecies. Far from it ; and while putting you on your guard against the dangers and abuses of that study, we are going this very day to call your attention specially to that subject, which should not indeed hold the first place in the preaching of the Gospel ministry, but which ought not to be absolutely excluded from it. Perhaps up to the present we have put it aside too much, therefore we will to-day make up for that neglect, and endeavour to fill up that gap in our preaching. Restrained within its legitimate bounds, the study of the prophecies presents not only matter of great interest but of great blessing, and many Christians do wrong when they lay aside completely that considerable portion of the Holy Scriptures. How many are there who see in the greatest part of the Apocalypse only a useless, whimsical, and inexplicable book, and one which it is not worth while to open ! And yet it is at the end of that book that the Apostle St. John has written this solemn declaration : "Happy is he who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy !" Believers under the old dispensation are presented to us as studying in the prophecies to them still unaccomplished the circumstances connected with the Lord's first coming. "The prophets," St. Peter tells us, "inquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." What believers under the old dispensation did with regard to the first coming of Christ, we ought to do, in a certain mea-

sure, in connection with His second. Let us take, then, this Apocalypse of which it is said by the Lord that "Blessed is he who reads and understands," and, whilst asking God to direct us in that study, and to guard us against flights of our imagination, let us exert ourselves to throw some light upon the views, at once obscure and grand, which prophecy presents to us in the regions of the future.

To-day I desire particularly to call your attention to that glorious reign of Christ which is announced in a great number of prophecies, and more particularly in the words of our text, and which is known in the Christian Church under the name of the Millennium.

What idea must we form of the Millennium? What will that glorious period be, if not in its details, which it would be impossible for us exactly to determine, at least in its general character? That is an interesting and important question, worthy in all respects to occupy our attention. It cannot be without interest for you, nor unprofitable to devote some moments to that study, and to seek to give you on that subject notions as clear as our actual knowledge and the teachings of Scripture admit of.

To determine what the Millennium will be, it is proper first to point out the principal passages of Scripture which appear to allude to it. Here are some of them :—

* *"In His time shall the righteous flourish, and there will be abundance of peace as long as the moon endureth. He shall also reign from one sea to the other, and from the river to the ends of the earth. The inhabitants of the deserts shall prostrate themselves before Him, and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall present gifts to him; the kings of Sheba and of Seba shall bring presents. All kings shall fall before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. A handful of corn being sown in the earth on the summit of the mountains, the fruit which it will produce will sound like the trees of Lebanon, and men shall*

* All these passages are translated from the French version.

flourish in the towns like the grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever ; His renown shall continue from father to son as long as the sun shall continue, and men shall be blessed in Him ; all nations shall proclaim Him blessed." (Ps. lxxii., 7—17.)

"It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the summit of the mountains, and be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people ; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Is. ii., 2—4.)

"With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth ; and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling, together, and a little child shall lead them. The young cow shall feed with the bear ; their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the depth of the sea with the waters which cover it. For in that day it shall come to pass that the nations shall seek the root of Jesse, raised to be an ensign to the people ; and His rest shall be glorious." (Is. xi., 4—10.)

"Thus saith the Lord God : behold I will raise my hand towards the nations, and I will raise my ensign towards the people ; and they shall bear thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers ; they shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord, and that those who wait on me shall not be ashamed." (Is. xlix., 22, 23.)

"I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings ; and thou shalt know that I, the Lord, am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron : and I will cause peace to reign over thee, and justice to govern thee. Violence shall no more be heard of in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders : but thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. And as to thy people, they shall be all righteous ; they shall possess the land for ever ; they shall be the branch of my planting, the work of my hands in whom I shall be glorified. The little family shall increase to a thousand persons, and the smallest shall become a strong nation. I am the Lord, I will hasten it in its time.” (Is. lx., 15—22.)

“ He who would bless himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth ; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth ; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For behold I create new heavens, and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create : for, behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people : and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more then an infant living only a few days, nor an old man that hath not filled up his days : for he who shall die a hundred years old shall be still young ; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them ; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit ; they shall not plant and another eat ; for the days of my people shall equal the days of the trees, and mine elect shall see the work of their hands continue long. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth children to be exposed to trouble ; for they shall be the posterity of the blessed of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that before they cry I will hear them ; and while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock ; and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy, in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.” (Is. lxx., 16—25.)

“ The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, by

consuming and destroying it till they see an end of it ; that the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms which are under all the heavens may be given to the people of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all the empires shall serve and obey Him." (Dan. vii., 26, 27.)

And finally the six verses of our text, which contain the most characteristic prophecy relative to the Millennium. It is the only one where the duration of that glorious period is fixed ; the only one also where mention is made of the resurrection of the faithful to reign with Christ.

What meaning should we give to these declarations, and in what will that reign of Christ upon earth precisely consist ? Two different systems divide on this point those Christians who are occupied with the prophecies. A certain number of them take the declarations which we have just read in their literal sense ; they believe that the Saviour is really to return to the earth, to found here a temporal kingdom ; that He will literally sit in His body on the throne of David ; that during that reign, which will continue a thousand years, the believing dead only will rise to have part in the glory of their Head ; and that this kingdom of Christ will be an epoch of temporal prosperity.

The other class of interpreters understand these prophecies in a figurative sense. They think that by the reign of Christ must be understood the dominion which He exercises over souls by the Gospel, and that the main point in these magnificent oracles is the spiritual progress of the Church ; they think that this resurrection of believing souls spoken of in our text denotes nothing more than the awakening of the spirit of faith. The Christian law having become the rule, and infidelity the exception ; the Gospel covering the whole earth with its sweet and holy influence ; there is what the Millennium would be.

Of these two interpretations, which have at all times di-

vided those who are devoted to prophetical studies, and which have both their partisans at the present day, we do not hesitate to prefer the last, the spiritual interpretation : and these are the principal considerations which cause the choice.

Observe, first, that the spiritual or symbolical interpretation is more in agreement with the modes of style observed in general by the prophets, and in particular in the Apocalypse. This style, from one end of the book to the other, is essentially symbolical and figurative ; everywhere moral ideas are concealed under a veil of material images ; words are incessantly turned aside from their proper meaning to receive meanings altogether novel. In this style, quite impregnated with the symbolical, a church becomes a candlestick, a minister becomes a star, a single individual represents a complete succession, death and the resurrection cease to designate what are ordinarily understood by these words, and represent facts of moral order. It is thus that, in the eleventh chapter of the Apocalypse, mention is made of " two witnesses " who were to prophecy, clothed in sackcloth, that is to say, covered with robes of mourning, during a period at which the Church would be in a state of abasement and of oppression. It is generally admitted that in these two witnesses there is to be seen the picture of God's faithful servants who were to give testimony to the truth at a period when the truth would be oppressed. The prophecy announces that at the end of a certain time these two witnesses will be put to death, but that after three days and a half they will rise again. Now, all interpreters, without exception, agree in acknowledging that this death and this resurrection should be understood in a purely symbolical sense : the witnesses will die, which means that the Gospel will cease for a time to have recognised and visible defenders ; they will resume life, that is to say, God will raise up other men animated with the same spirit and who will give the same testimony. Is it not natural to under-

stand in the same way that resurrection of the righteous of which our text speaks, and to see in it a figurative expression, representing a general awakening of faith—the coming forth of an immense number of Christians, who will, as it were, bring to life again the ancient righteous men by reproducing their spirit? We might cite many other examples, even outside the prophecies, to support the symbolical sense here given to the term *resurrection*. When the prodigal son returns to his father, the latter declares that he “was dead” but is “alive again;” the change of heart by the Gospel is constantly called in Scripture a new birth, a “resurrection;” the future conversion of the Jewish people is called in the Epistle to the Romans “a resurrection from the dead.” When, then, St. John, in his essentially figurative style of prophecy, tells us of a resurrection of the righteous who were put to death for the testimony of Jesus, it is perfectly in agreement with the analogy of Scripture to see there a picture representing a vast awakening of faith—the conversion of numerous masses to the Gospel—after a time of oppression and of persecution.

Not only is that interpretation legitimate, in so far as it is in agreement with the analogy of Scripture, but it is in a manner required by the very expressions of our text. In fact, observe well that St. John speaks only of the *souls* of those who had been put to death for the testimony of Jesus; these are the souls which are to revive again and reign with Christ. Now, souls cannot rise again, in the proper sense of the word. As they cannot lose life, neither can they take it up again. This part of the prophecy is therefore inexplicable on the literal system of interpretation; whilst it explains itself if we use it of a symbolical resurrection, of a revival of the faith which animated the righteous men of old.

In the third place, the literal interpretation is not in harmony with the other passages of holy Scripture which relate to the resurrection. Nowhere is the resurrection spoken of

as to take place twice or at two different periods. This great event is always represented to us as to take place for all men at once, with this only difference, that the resurrection of the just will immediately precede that of the wicked. The following passages clearly establish this :—“ Those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan. xii., 2.) “ The hour will come when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and come forth, they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.” (John v., 28.) “ The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, and an archangel’s voice, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first ; then we shall be caught up, together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and thus shall we be ever with the Lord.” (1 Thess. iv., 16, 17.) It evidently follows from these statements that the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the wicked, shall be immediately followed by the judgment and eternal life.

In the fourth place, it is impossible to comprehend how a return to the earth could add anything to the happiness of the righteous who died in the faith, and are gathered into the rest which is reserved for the people of God. Whatever the temporal blessings might be which, during the period of the Millennium, will accompany the progress of the Gospel, the earth will in a certain measure be none the less a habitation of imperfection, of suffering, and of death, till the present economy is definitely terminated by the general resurrection ; and this is clearly proved by the circumstance, announced by the prophet, that Satan is to be unloosed, and enmity awakened for a time against the Gospel *after* the Millennium. Moreover, how can we admit that the temporal blessings connected with that glorious epoch can have value for souls who have seen the

veil of the flesh fall, and who, according to the expression of St. Paul, have "left this body to be with the Lord"? Verily, in the case of the righteous dead, it would be a retrogression were they to come back to dwell on earth; and it would be the same for Christ in the system which we combat. How can it be supposed that He will exchange that supreme glory on which He entered through death, for the glory of a terrestrial kingdom? Will you cause Him to descend from that eternal throne which He shares with His Father, in order to place Him on a temporal throne? Such a supposition strikes at once the whole spirit of the evangelical economy, and is no other than a return to Judaism. The error of the Jews consisted precisely in representing the Messiah as a temporal King; it is into a similar error that the Millennarians of to-day fall.

And then, what becomes, in the system of literal interpretation, of the death of believers who are born during the Millennium? In the actual state of things, the death of believers is a deliverance; they die in peace, because they leave a life of trials and an abode of misery to go to the Lord; but it would not be so during the period of the Millennium, if the literal interpretation were true. Then death would become to believers "the king of terrors," and it would be impossible for them to receive it in peace, because to die would be to leave the abode honoured and adorned with the Saviour's presence, to go where the Saviour would not be, at least as regards His humanity; to die would no longer be to go to Christ, but to leave Christ; the believer could no longer, like Stephen, "commit his spirit into the hands of the Lord Jesus;" he could no longer say, like Paul, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Is not such a supposition out of harmony with the whole analogy of faith?

This is not all. If the literal interpretation were true, there

would then be three comings of Christ :—one to save the world, another to judge it, and a third and intermediate one to occupy the throne of the Millennium. Now Scripture constantly presents to us the last judgment as the Lord's second coming ; and nowhere is an intermediate coming admitted. " As it is appointed to men," says St. Paul, " once to die, after which follows the judgment : so Christ also, being once offered to take away the sins of many, will appear a second time without sin unto salvation to those who wait for Him." (Heb. ix., 27, 28.) And moreover, " It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to those who trouble you, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, taking vengeance with flaming fire on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction by the presence of the Lord, and by the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be admired in all those who believe." (2 Thess. i., 6—10.) You see there is no distinction between the return of Christ to glorify His elect, and the judgment which is to destroy His enemies. It is, moreover, in this that we all profess to believe, when we repeat every Sabbath in the creed : " He ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, from whence He shall come." Why ? to sit on a temporal throne ? to found a kingdom on earth ? No, but " **TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.**" The reign of Christ on earth, of which our text speaks, must be, if we will not put ourselves in opposition to Scripture, a spiritual reign.

Finally, the passage in the Apocalypse which we are examining, is the only passage of Holy Scripture where a resurrection is spoken of to take place before the end of the world ; whilst a great number of other prophecies with regard to the Millennium, announce clearly the progress and general triumph of the Gospel. Now, which is more

rational: to explain numerous and clear prophecies by one single and enigmatical passage in the Apocalypse, or rather to explain the single and obscure passage by the clear and numerous prophecies? To put such a question is to answer it. The subject, then, in this passage is only a symbolical resurrection; the progress and triumph of the Gospel, represented as a revival of the spirit which animated righteous men of old. But if this revival of the spirit of faith is called the *first resurrection*, it is not in reference to the general resurrection of the body which is to take place at the end of the world: it is in reference to the revival of infidelity and of enmity to the Gospel which is to succeed the Millennium. After that period, Satan is to be unloosed from his prison, and afresh to seduce, but only for a short time, the nations of the earth; it is that momentary revival of evil, and of evil persons, which appears in the thought of the sacred writer as the *second resurrection*—a resurrection purely symbolical as well as the first. Nowhere in the whole passage is there reference to the resurrection of the body; that is reserved for the day of judgment.

It appears then established, as far as we can be positive in such a matter, that the reign of Christ, known under the name of the Millennium, is to be understood in a spiritual sense, and that the subject is the authority which He will exercise over souls by the progress of the Gospel. We have as yet entered only upon the preliminary parts, as you see, of our subject. There would remain to be determined, according to Scripture, the principal characteristics of that spiritual reign of Christ which is announced to take place in the last days. How must we understand the period of the thousand years which is assigned to that reign? In what will that general triumph of the Gospel which prophecy promises to us precisely consist? What will be the changes which the Gospel, having become dominant, will introduce into human societies?

What will the temporal blessings be which are to accompany its triumph, since it has at once all the promises of the life to come and those of the present life? What conjectures may we form as to the probable period where the Millennium should be placed in the future? These are questions full of interest and well worthy to occupy our attention, but which it is not possible for us to-day to enter upon. There is no more than time for us to draw some practical conclusions from the above considerations.

The doctrine of the Millennium, as we have presented it to you, has important consequences as regards conversion and as regards salvation. Indeed, since that glorious reign of Christ—towards which for so many ages the hope and gaze of the Church have turned—is a spiritual reign, since it will essentially consist in the submission of hearts to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it depends upon each of us as to whether the Millennium should commence in our case from the present: in order to that, no more is necessary than that we submit our heart to the Gospel, and give ourselves to Christ. Give your heart to Christ, my dearly beloved brethren, and you will taste from the present the blessings promised to the last days. Submit your thoughts and affections to the Gospel; accept all the declarations of the Word of God with the docile simplicity of the little child; strip yourselves of your own righteousness, to wrap yourselves in the righteousness of Christ; receive eternal life as a free gift which God grants to poor sinners lost and condemned of themselves; love in your turn Him who has so loved you as to die for you on the cross; live to serve Him, to glorify Him, to imitate Him; ask from Him from day to day, to help your feebleness, that Spirit of wisdom and of power which He has promised to shed abroad abundantly upon His redeemed, and you will have but little cause to envy believers of the last days. Faith in Christ, the love of Christ, salvation by Christ, the joy of Christ, the ser-

vice of Christ, the imitation of Christ—that is the whole of the Millennium. And who hinders you from tasting from the present time all these blessings? Who hinders you from enjoying even now the joy of a soul reconciled to God, in which Jesus reigns without a rival, who possesses eternal life, and who can say with St. Paul: “Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor devils, nor heights nor depths, nor things present nor things to come, nor any creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God testified to me in Jesus Christ!”

May God grant that a great number of souls may know in this Church of themselves this reign of Christ, at once so powerful and so tender, so sweet and so glorious! If the Millennium were come to individuals, it would have come by that very means to the Church. If the majority of us Christians by name became living Christians, our happy Church would offer to the world the ravishing spectacle of a people of God who realise the benedictions of the last days. Then our worship would be no more, as it is still to a great number, a form without life and without love—a mere religious dress: it would become the expression of a real and profound want; our assemblies would be truly assemblies of the redeemed of Christ, uniting themselves together to render homage to their Saviour-King; Christ would have His throne in all hearts. Then the religious instruction of catechumens would no longer be, as it still so frequently is, a vain and barren formality; it would become what it ought to be, what it was in the first ages of the Church, a real nursery of Christians; the solemn yearly reception would not only augment the outward congregation, but Christ’s spiritual people; it would not only add names to the catalogue of Protestants, but souls to the Church to be saved. Then our communions would, in reality, be holy festivals, the sacred repasts of

brethren and sisters meeting in the same love and in the same faith, to rejoice in the possession of one and the same salvation, and together to approach the same Saviour. Then a Christian brotherhood would reign among us : the members of our Church would mutually love, support, console, exhort one another, like children of one and the same family ; and before thinking of such or such social distinctions as tend, perhaps, to separate them, they would remember that the common character of Christ's redeemed brings them together and unites them. Then those who feel the value of the Gospel would practise a virtue too much ignored in our Church—the renunciation of the world : we should no longer see in it that spirit of worldliness which does us so much evil, which stops so many half Christians on the way, and hinders their progress in sanctification. The souls which the Saviour has touched would no longer try to reconcile what is irreconcilable, and all would comprehend that the servants of Christ are to be a people set apart, separated from the world, having no longer a taste for its pleasures, and placing all their happiness in fidelity to their divine King.

My brethren, would that be but a vain Utopia ? and must we despair of ever seeing blessings so precious spread abroad over our Church ? Must we, of necessity, dismiss to an obscure and distant future, a future which none of us shall see, the spiritual treasures announced for the last days ? God grant that it may not be so ! May God grant us voluntarily to renounce ourselves to the grace which is promised us from the present moment, and which from the present moment we may taste ! Let us not lose our courage. “ Let us not give up our confidence.” “ Let us only believe, and we shall see the glory of God.” Let us be only faithful, each in his humble and little sphere, to glorify Christ by our works and by our words, to extend and strengthen His reign before all in our hearts, and then around us in our families. May

each family be regulated according to the laws of Christ, and Christ will soon reign over all the Church. But in order to that we must labour, we must fight, we must be workers with our Saviour in His holy work, and not expect the coming of extraordinary and miraculous dispensations. On each of us God has been pleased to make the true Millennium depend,—the Millennium which may be realised at all times, at all periods of the Church. And while bringing to an end this discourse on the glorious reign of Jesus Christ, the last word which I have on my heart to lay on your conscience, and to propose for your meditation, is that deep and solemn saying of the Saviour to His disciples: “Lo, the kingdom of God is within you!” Amen.





THE MILLENNIUM.

By the REV. HORACE MONOD, *Pastor, Marseilles.*

II.

“ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.—REV. XX., 1—6.



IN our first discourse on these words we endeavoured to fix their general sense; we saw that in order to their not standing in disagreement either with the analogy of faith, or with the style of the prophets, we are inevitably led to take these expressions of the prophetic apostle in a figurative sense; that the reign of Christ and of His redeemed here spoken of is nothing else than the spiritual supremacy exercised by the Gospel on hearts; and that the

resurrection of righteous men of old who were put to death for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, is nothing else than a general awakening of the spirit of faith.

Having thus fixed the general sense of the promises relating to the Millennium, and circumscribed the field on which our study should bear, it remains for us to inquire what are the principal features with which that blessed and glorious period is depicted in prophecy. It is here that we enter, properly speaking, the heart of our subject, the preliminary parts of which we have only as yet been able to touch upon. Thus far we have looked at it under an essentially negative point of view: it remains for us to contemplate its positive and glorious side. We have said what the Millennium is not: it remains for us to inquire what it is; and never has a subject more vast, more rich, more worthy of a serious and profound interest been offered for our meditation.

First of all, we have said, the Millennium will consist in the general sway of the Gospel over the earth. Scripture reveals to us, and that in a great many prophecies, that a time will come when the whole earth shall know God our Saviour: that is what it calls, in its figurative style, the reign of Christ. As most of those passages were given in our former discourse, it is not necessary to repeat them here.

To one who believes the word of God, its language upon this subject cannot leave one single doubt as to this great fact—that a time will come when the Gospel will reign over the whole world. It does not follow from this, however, that all men will from the heart be converted to the Gospel: the expressions of the prophecy go not so far; they speak only of the *knowledge* of the Lord as about to cover the whole earth; and we know that knowledge may co-exist with an unconverted heart. The subject here is the reign of the visible Church, and it is in this sense that the prophecies of which we speak are in agreement with other passages of Scripture,

such as certain parables of the Saviour which state, that unbelief will continue till the end of the world. In the householder's field there will be "till the day of judgment," tares mixed with the good grain; but that field, which is the visible Church, is one day to invade the whole world; and this is what the Lord Himself announces to us when, in the explanation of that parable, He tells us: "The field is the world." Without doubt, when the field of the visible Church will be really blended with the world; when there will no longer exist a solitary point on the earth where the sun of righteousness does not shine; when all men shall know God our Saviour, at that happy time the number of souls really converted will far surpass that of false Christians, and the true servants of Jesus Christ will be an immense majority, just as in a field of wheat the number of ears of corn is infinitely beyond that of the stems of tares; but nevertheless it remains certain that there will be till the end tares along with the wheat, and false Christians alongside of the true servants of Jesus Christ. That follows implicitly from the very chapter of the Apocalypse which we to-day study; for it is there said that after the thousand years of Christ's reign, Satan is to be loosed from his prison, and shall seduce anew the inhabitants of the earth; a thing which could not take place if he had not found certain evil elements in that very Church of the Saviour which will cover the world.

We will not attempt to determine what, as to its outward form, that Church of the future will be, which is to gather all nations into its vast bosom. The Church of Christ has a certain basis of belief and of Christian life, which is the same at all times; but its form may vary from one age to another; it has varied up till the present, it will still vary in the future. We do not profess to have arrived at the exact expression of the Gospel, or the exact form in which it is to subsist till the end of time. The Church of the Millennium will not, it is pro-

bable, be one of those which we know to-day ; it will be neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant : at once liberal and pure, cultured and popular, it will be able better than any of the present forms to adapt itself to all climates, to answer all wants, to satisfy all minds and all hearts. But, as we can only on this point indulge in conjectures, let us stop, let us bridle our imagination, and leave to the Lord the care of finding for the Church of the future the form which will suit it.

One of the features characteristic of that glorious period, is that the Gospel, by that very means through which it will have become dominant, will have penetrated to the most elevated classes and to the rulers of the nations. Governments will be inspired by the Gospel, administrations will be Christian. "Kings will be thy nursing fathers," says the prophet to the Church, "they shall prostrate themselves before thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet." "I will make thee an eternal exaltation, and thou shalt suck the milk of nations, and thou shalt suck the breast of kings ; and I will cause peace to reign over thee, and righteousness to govern thee." "Lord ! all the kings of the earth shall proclaim Thee, when they shall have heard the words of Thy mouth ; and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord is great." (Ps. cxxxviii., 4, 5.) Jesus Christ shall then continue to reign in this sense, that His Gospel will be seated on the throne in the person of sovereigns converted to the Christian faith. Then the religion of Christ will no longer be a mere political instrument in the hand of governments ; it will no longer cover, as with a sacred mantle, the views of a profane ambition ; it will be the sincere expression of the moral life of states. That is clearly an immense fact, and one the bearing of which is incalculable. Who would be able to picture to himself what the world will be, when governments will have everywhere become Christian ; when all sovereigns, all legislators, all magistrates will render

to God a pure worship, a worship in spirit and in truth ; when everywhere the Christian faith will be the guarantee of an administration at once just and benevolent ; when all laws will have their roots in the Gospel, and will reflect the maxims of the Saviour !

The Gospel brings with it promises relative to the life that is as well as to that which is to come ; and when it will have become dominant in the world, that universal reign of the Gospel will draw with it temporal blessings, of which at the present time we can have but a very feeble idea. When we say that the promises connected with the Millennium are to be taken in a spiritual sense, we speak of the very essence of that kingdom of Christ which characterises the Millennium ; but we do not by any means intend to exclude the extraordinary temporal blessings which will of necessity flow from the dominion exercised by the Gospel. There is a medium view to be taken between the system which sees in the Millennium a reign of our Lord in a material and gross sense, and another system which would altogether exclude from that glorious period the things of temporal order. There will be in the Millennium, we cannot doubt it, extraordinary blessings when looked at even from a temporal point of view ; not only are they announced clearly in the prophecies, but they flow inevitably from the very fact of the Gospel having become dominant, so that we should have been able to conjecture them beforehand had prophecy not announced them to us.

Among the blessed results which the Gospel will necessarily produce in the world when submissive to its laws, one of those which Scripture puts in the first class, and to which it reverts most readily, is the abolishment of war, and the establishment of a universal peace. Nothing is more incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel than that monstrous state of things which is called war : that ferocious law, that dismal

relic of barbarian times, which condemns children of one and the same heavenly Father—members of the same human family, beings whom everything should draw together and unite—methodically to advance one against the other to be massacred according to the rules of art. When the Gospel will have become dominant, war will appear to the eyes of all what it appears to-day to the eyes of Christians, and what it really is, a monstrous folly. Just as in consequence of the progress of civilisation and the softening of manners, we no longer comprehend legal torture ; just as we no longer comprehend slavery, so a time will come when men will no longer comprehend that there could ever have existed a thing so odious, so horrible, so absurd as war. “ He will exercise judgment among the nations,” says the prophet, “ and He will rebuke many people ; they shall beat their swords into mattocks, and their spears into pruning hooks ; one nation shall no longer lift the sword against another, and they shall apply themselves to war no longer. But every one shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one to make them afraid : for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

At the same time that enmities will be appeased among nations, they shall also cease among individuals. Hatred, vengeance, personal violence, will come to an end ; the most unyielding characters will be softened ; concord, charity, sincerity will preside over all the relations existing among men ; natures the most opposed to one another will learn to draw near and love one another ; and that is without doubt the sense which should be given to certain expressions in the prophecies which we have been sometimes asked to take literally, but which it appears to us far more natural to take in a figurative sense : “ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,

* All these texts are translated from the French version.

and the leopard shall lodge with the kid ; the cow and the lion shall be together, and a little child shall lead them. The young cow shall feed with the bear, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt, nor wrong any one in all my holy mountain, the Lord hath said."*

But there is more. At the same time that the Gospel having become dominant softens hearts, it will produce quite naturally another blessed consequence, which at first view does not seem to depend on its influence. I mean a considerable diminution of physical and moral suffering. Among the evils which press upon humanity, there are a great many which are the immediate result of crime or of vice. When the great majority of men will follow the precepts of the Gospel ; when they will live "in the present time according to temperance, justice, and piety," the cause of a multitude of diseases which are transmitted from generation to generation will be by that very means removed. When there will be no more wars, enmities, quarrels, and revenge, the bitter source of many afflictions will be dried up. Without doubt there will still be trials, but every person will then make an effort to alleviate the sufferings of those who surround him ; the hope of eternal glory, and the prospect of a happy reunion in the heavenly mansions, will make disease, death, and the loss of the objects of our affections much less painful than they are to-day ; communion with the Saviour and with His saints will become an inexhaustible source of consolation and of joy, in the midst of the imperfections still connected with our earthly life ; men rejoicing with moderation over all the gifts of the Creator will possess them doubly ; in a word, the temporal happiness of mankind will increase in proportions beyond calculation, and will realise the most

* These last words appear to repeat in literal terms what the preceding verses express in figurative terms.

characteristic descriptions of prophecy: "Behold I will create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a rejoicing. I will be glad over Jerusalem, I will rejoice over my people, and there shall be heard there neither sorrow nor weeping any longer."

At the same time that suffering will decrease, and always by a natural consequence of the benefits attached to the Gospel, the duration of human life will be increased; it will reach the utmost limit which nature assigns it; neither vice, nor despair, nor violence, will any longer abridge the days of man. That is also a characteristic to be observed in the prophecies respecting the Millennium. "There will be then no longer a child living only a few days; for he that shall die a hundred years old will be still young; they shall also build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build houses for another to inhabit; they shall not plant vineyards for another to eat the fruit of; for the days of my people shall equal the days of trees, and mine elect shall see the work of their hands grow old."

The extension of human life in duration will necessarily be accompanied by an extraordinary increase of the population. It is easy to understand how much more rapid that increase would be if wars, vice, intemperance, selfishness, poverty, and the want of confidence in God, did not come and put obstacles in the way; if the life of men were not shortened by a multitude of causes which will no longer exist when the Gospel and its principles shall reign in their hearts. Then marriage, that sacred institution which God Himself gave to the infant world, will bear in the regenerated world all its blessed fruits, looked at from a temporal point of view as well as from a moral. We may conclude that the number of men who will live on the earth during the Millennium will go beyond that of the men who will have lived during all the

preceding ages ; so that the portion of mankind which shall be saved will be infinitely more numerous, taken altogether, than those who shall be lost ; and that thus “ grace will abound over sin ” (Rom. v., 20, 21), as several passages of Scripture point out. That extraordinary increase of population is moreover a characteristic feature of the prophecies relating to the Millennium. “ A handful of corn being sown in the earth, on the summit of the mountains, its fruit shall be like the fruit of Lebanon, and men shall flourish in the cities like the grass of the earth.” “ The little family shall increase to a thousand persons, and the least shall become a strong nation. I am the Lord, and I will hasten it in its time.”

Another feature of the glorious period when the Gospel which has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come, shall prevail, is an unprecedented scope being given to industry and to the arts and sciences. Mankind will develop in all legitimate and salutary senses ; the prodigious activity with which the Creator has gifted man, being no longer turned aside from its true aim, nor expended on hurtful or barren occupations, will be turned altogether towards the arts of peace, towards things that are good, lovely and useful ; the earth, cultivated and rendered fruitful, which social agitations will no longer come and interrupt, will recover almost her original fertility, and will abundantly suffice to nourish a population infinitely more numerous than the present ; the question of pauperism—that insoluble problem which causes the philanthropists of our day to despair—will then be resolved naturally and without cost by the double development of intelligence and charity. Art and industry will create marvels, before which the most wonderful inventions of our day will grow pale. Science, no longer sceptical or infidel, will come and lay down her tribute of homage at the feet of the God of the Bible.

Commerce will no more have for its spring selfishness, nor for its means fraud: consecrated to the general good of humanity, it will freely exchange the produce of all nations, and enrich them, the one by the other. "I will cause gold to come instead of brass, and I will cause silver to come instead of iron, and brass instead of wood, and iron instead of stones. Violence shall no more be heard in thy country, nor calamities in thy regions, but thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise!"

However marvellous the prospects which we have unfolded may appear, all these blessings are the natural and necessary consequences of the Gospel having become dominant in the earth. Let the time only come when the whole earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, and all the wonders of the Millennium are not only possible, but they are in some sort unavoidable. The whole question then reduces itself to knowing if it is really possible that a time should come when all the nations of the earth will be converted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Can such a result be produced by the natural means which are in operation at the present time to spread the Gospel? Will it not demand a miraculous intervention of divine omnipotence? and unless there be a change in the natural and regular course of human affairs, would there not be needed, in order to bring about the conversion of the entire world, a space of time the length of which would terrify the imagination?

At first sight, I admit, the answer to these questions does not seem likely to be satisfactory. When we compare the actual state of the world with the promises of the Millennium; when we think of the thick moral darkness which still envelops the great majority of the human family; when we consider on one side the small number of Christians, and on the other the great number of Mohammedans and pagans; when we consider that in that little fraction which is called Christian,

the true servants of Jesus Christ form the minority,—it does not seem possible indeed that that almost imperceptible minority, that drop of water lost, as it were, in the ocean of nations, that handful of true Christians, can ever become the majority and subject the whole world to their influence; I say it seems impossible that such a result can be attained, unless the ordinary course of things be changed by a miraculous intervention of Divine Power.

But that first impression soon gives way before a more attentive examination and a deeper reflection. After having studied the question, we affirm, without hesitation, that it is by no means necessary to suppose a miracle in order to bring about the conversion of the world, and that the action of ordinary means, of those employed to day, is abundantly sufficient to produce this result in a space of time even restricted enough. Observe, indeed, in the first place, that the Gospel, from that very consideration that it is the truth, ought of necessity to make progress in the world, and gain little by little upon error. In its struggle against paganism the Gospel cannot be overcome: it never has been, it never will be. The conversion of the heathen world can then be only a question of time. Observe, in the second place, that, in the very nature of things, the progress of the Gospel in the world proceeds of necessity with a perpetually increasing rapidity. Every one of the heathen brought to Christianity becomes himself the means of propagating the Gospel among other heathen, not only because a certain number of them become evangelists or missionaries, but also by that indirect and insensible influence which every Christian of necessity exercise around him, especially in a heathen country. The result is that the extension of the Gospel should follow a geometrical progression, of which it is impossible to calculate the prodigious effects. The result of each new year is not the same as that of the preceding one; but it is double, treble, or four-

depend. We know that missions are a work, not only appointed by God, but reasonable, productive, and full of prospect; we know that this handful of feeble missionaries, advancing to the conquest of the heathen world, will finish by conquering the world, and that before long; we know that the world is promised to the Gospel, not only by the declarations of God's Word, but also by the teachings of experience and of reason; we know that the Millennium is not only a brilliant ideal created by prophecy, but that it will be the natural, regular, unfailing consequence of what passes now and henceforth under our eyes.

A last question might remain for examination on the subject of the Millennium: we do not attach great importance to it, for it is more curious than useful; but we will yet say some words about it. What conjectures may we form as to the period in the future when the Millennium should commence? Many different systems, we have said, have been successively ventured with respect to that; many calculations have pretended to fix the commencement of the last days; many periods announced beforehand as about to be the final boundary marked out by prophecy have in turn passed away, and that end has not yet come. We will be very careful not to pronounce with confidence in a matter which God has evidently intended to leave uncertain, because it is not essential to salvation. We will confine ourselves to presenting our views on this subject as mere conjectures, which have certainly some plausibility in our eyes, but to which we are far from attaching a capital importance, and which each one is free to admit or to reject.

Our way of looking at the period when the Millennium is to commence, has this advantage, that it is in conformity with the popular opinion, with that which has been most generally spread abroad since the commencement of the Christian Church. The general thought in that respect, the general

presentiment of the Church, is that the Millennium is to commence after the present world shall have endured six thousand years ; it would be the Millennial Sabbath of mankind. This supposition would place it towards the end of the twentieth century of the Christian era, towards the year of Christ two thousand. There would run then about a century and a half between our generation and that glorious period.

Let us remark, in the first place, that from the present state of the world, and the progress which the Gospel has made since the commencement of our century, it is to be presumed that the Millennium ought not to be very far distant. As we have observed, a century and a half ought to suffice, according to all human probabilities, to bring about the conversion of the world. Our supposition has then no unlikelihood in this respect. Further, it is conformed to the analogy of Scripture, and to the course followed up till the present in the dispensations of God towards the world. In Scripture the number seven represents the idea of perfection ; the most part of God's great dispensations are divided into seven periods ; they are continued during the six, and the seventh terminates them.

It is thus that the creation of the world was accomplished in six days, or rather in six periods ; the seventh day, or the seventh period, is a sabbath or rest. The ceremonial purifications ordained by Moses were continued during six days, and were terminated on the seventh. In the sacrifices offered for grievous sins, the sprinkling of blood was made seven times, on the seventh sprinkling the atonement was accomplished. The siege of Jericho continues seven days, on the seventh day the town falls into the power of God's people. The captivity of the Israelites is continued during seven periods, each containing ten years ; seven other periods, each containing seventy years, continued between the return from the captivity and the coming of the Messiah. In the visions of the Apoca-

lypse, the Apostle St. John sees a book sealed with seven seals, each of these seals represents a period in the future of the Church. Each of the six periods is in succession described, and ended in the prophetic vision, but it is not so with the seventh. The seventh seal contains within itself seven new periods, represented each by the sound of a trumpet. The periods of the six trumpets are, in succession, described and ended in the prophecy, but it is not so with the seventh. This seventh trumpet comprises within itself seven new periods, represented each by a vial, the contents of which are poured forth on the earth. The periods of the six vials are, in succession, described in the prophecy, but after the seventh there is nothing more : that seventh vial includes the end of the times.

Since then it is a character, which seems essential to the dispensations of God, that they should continue during seven periods, and never beyond the seventh, we may suppose, by analogy, that the present world is to continue during seven periods of a thousand years, the last of which would be the Millennium. That supposition acquires especially a high degree of probability when we compare the present dispensation, considered in its successive phases, with the account of creation. According to a very ancient tradition, and one found already among the Jews, the six days of Genesis would be six periods of a thousand years—a supposition which is confirmed by two passages of Scripture, where it is said, in speaking particularly of the creation, “That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” There exists elsewhere striking correspondences between the six days of the physical creation, and the periods of the present economy, which commenced at the fall of man, and which are to end at the Millennium. After the six days—or in our hypothesis—after the six thousand years of the physical creation, the work of God was terminated—all that He

had done was good, and very good; and if man had remained in his primitive state, the Millennium would have commenced immediately after the sixth day; there would have been for the earth a period of repose and of happiness which would have endured a thousand years; after which man would have been exalted to the glory of eternity without passing through death. But man having sinned, the seventh day of Genesis, the Millennium Sabbath which was to follow the six days of creative work, the Millennium in short, is found to be *postponed*—God has had to wait till He has accomplished in this degenerate world a new creation—a moral creation. This moral creation, like the physical creation, is to be accomplished in six days, or in six thousand years. In the physical creation there is a progressive gradation for beings less perfect to beings more perfect; there is the same in the moral creation, where humanity goes on perfecting itself from age to age, and from one thousand years to another. On the first day of the physical creation, God gives existence to light, but this light, still scattered and diffused, enlightens but imperfectly till the fourth day; so on the first day of the moral creation, immediately after the fall, God gives the world the light of a revelation, but that revelation is still incomplete, it is composed of scattered rays, and it is so until the fourth millennial period of mankind. On the fourth day of the physical creation, God collects the light which had been scattered during the preceding days, and concentrates it in one fixed body, the sun; so in the fourth millennial period of mankind, the light of Divine revelations, scattered till then, takes a body and concentrates itself in the person of the Messiah, “The Sun of Righteousness, with health in His rays.” At the end of the sixth day of the first creation, God completes His physical work by creating man in His own image; so at the end of the sixth period of the present economy, He will have completed His moral work by creating in humanity the new

man, who will reproduce the Divine image, which was defaced by sin.

We may then suppose that mankind will be ripe for the Millennium at the end of the sixth period, six thousand years after the creation of the world, and two thousand years after the coming of the Saviour.

The end of the Millennium will be the signal of the events which are to mark the end of the world. "When the thousand years shall be accomplished," the prophet has told us, "Satan will be loosed from his prison, and he will afresh seduce the inhabitants of the earth." But that last seduction will continue but a moment, and will bring with it the final defeat of all the powers of darkness; the dead shall rise to appear in judgment, and the economy of time will give place to that of eternity.

But why should I let myself be drawn away to calculate the end of the times? What do such considerations concern us as regards our most serious and most pressing interests, as regards our eternal salvation? The age that now is, and the end of the year fast approaching, remind me, in conclusion, of an order of thought, more real, more personal, and having a more immediate application to each of us. Whether the Millennium is to commence at the end of the approaching century; whether the end of the world is to happen after seven thousand years, or whether these calculations, like so many others, are to be contradicted by the event, is a question which has for us no personal interest; and woe unto us, if distracted and seduced by pre-occupations of a distant future, we lose sight of preparing to-day to meet our God! I know not for certain at what period, more or less remote, we must place the end of time; but I know one thing, that the end of the world will come to you and to me in the future, which is very near at hand. The end of time for each of us is the end of our life; the coming of Christ is the day of our death. The end of

time for us will, perhaps, be the new year about to commence ; or it will, perhaps, be the last week of the year which is about to end. Perhaps this meeting for worship will be for us the last ; perhaps this appeal, which is addressed to us to-day, will be to us the last coming of Jesus Christ ! “ Let us then watch and pray, and be sober,” “ let us work out our sanctification in the fear of God ;” and may the Master, when He comes, find us ready and waiting for His coming, like faithful servants and handmaids ! Amen.





THE UNION OF SIMPLICITY AND PRUDENCE.

By DR. GRANDPIERRE, *Paris.*

"Be wise (prudent) as serpents, and harmless (simple) as doves."—
MATT. X., 16.

ONE of the prerogatives of truth is to harmonise contrasts, and to bring nearer and unite extremes. Christianity, which is absolute truth, possesses in the highest degree this excellent character, and it may be said that in it, as in a centre of universal harmony, is wonderfully combined and united all that appears to us broken, incoherent, inexplicable, and contradictory in ideas and in things, in men and in deeds, in ourselves and in the world. What human mind has ever succeeded in reconciling in God what appeared incompatible: the exercise of inflexible justice and that of unbounded love, the demands of perfect holiness and the desires of infinite mercy? By one fact the Gospel resolves that insoluble difficulty, and in the work of atonement, accomplished by the Son of God, shows us the means employed by the thrice holy God to put an end to the perplexities of our conscience and the doubts of our reason. To harmonise the existence of evil with that of a holy and Almighty God, the moral disorder which reigns in the world with the doctrine of a wise and just Providence, is another enigma, equally heart-distressing, and one which has tormented mankind in all ages. Here again the religion of Jesus Christ,

with its grand and fertile doctrine of a final and universal judgment, when God will render to every man according to his deeds, and justify His providence by making, in the case of all men, punishment equal with crime and reward equal with fidelity, banishes our alarms, and fully tranquilizes us. If you consider man without the light of revelation, what astonishing contradictions he presents ! He seeks truth, and is led astray whilst seeking it ; he aspires after honour, and does not find the way which leads to it ; he has grand thoughts, and he has mean ones ; he has noble aspirations, and he has foolish ones ; he intends good, and does evil. But if you study him in the light of the Word of God, you are no longer surprised at discovering in him tendencies so divergent, for you learn from it that at present he is in a fallen state, in which he has preserved of his original rectitude and of his primitive greatness but the sad remains of a ruined edifice. Moral science has, indeed, been able to comprehend and to teach that man should associate in his character certain opposite qualities, and practise in his life certain virtues which seem to exclude one another. It requires him to join gentleness with firmness, nobility of soul with a proper self-distrust, affability of manners with open-heartedness, kindness of disposition with the love of truth, simplicity with prudence, and so on. But the means of filling up the space between these extremes, of finding the point of union between these contrasts, and of working out their perfect fusion, so as to form out of them one homogeneous and harmonious whole, has it pointed out that ? Has it found it out ? Does it possess it ? No, because it belongs to the TRUTH alone to reveal in its doctrines, and to explain in its experience, facts which in the world of realities are evident and palpable.

That idea has not perhaps been developed till the present day with all the comprehensiveness of which it is susceptible, and all the importance which it deserves ; nevertheless, it

seems to us that if properly searched into and sufficiently developed, it might serve to add a page more to that apology of Christianity already so voluminous, which goes on increasing from age to age through all the discoveries of science, and from year to year through all the new facts which attest its divine origin and its powerful efficacy.

But I ought not to lose sight of the subject to which the reflections I have just made have been intended to lead you on. The harmony in the Christian character, the union in the Christian life of *prudence* and *simplicity*, that is what I intend to show you to-day. This is a point of practical morality of great utility, which will make us acquainted, if God should grant it, with more things than we, perhaps, suspect, if we confine ourselves only to a first glance thrown rapidly on the subject.

The words which serve us for a text were addressed by the Saviour to His disciples, when He sent them for the first time to publish the kingdom of God. To them they signified : “ You will find yourselves in the presence of a world, and engaged in a struggle with men who, in every way, will seek to thwart your views, to overthrow your enterprise, and to injure your persons. Be therefore on your guard ; but while fortifying yourselves against their attacks, do not employ, to resist them, the arms to which they have recourse in order to combat you. Remain on the defensive, without ever taking the hostile position of aggressors.” But there is nothing to prevent us understanding in a general manner what Christ said in a particular case, and applying to all Christians the recommendation which He addressed to His apostles only. For the world in the midst of which we are called to live does not essentially differ from that of which the first disciples of Jesus Christ were the contemporaries. The spirit which should animate us, the character which ought to distinguish us, the duties which we have to fulfil are the same ; there are not

two truths, two codes of morality, two kinds of Christian conduct, one for the apostles and the other for us ; we acknowledge but one truth, one code of morality, one kind of Christian life for the one and for the other.

It is scarcely necessary to call to mind here that the dove has been regarded by all nations as the symbol of innocence, and that the serpent, on the contrary, has been looked upon as the image of cunning. But what we shall remark is, that the word which has been translated in our versions by that of *harmless*, signifies properly, in the original, what is not armed with horns to attack, what has not teeth to bite, what has not a sting to wound ; and, consequently, in a moral point of view, what has no intention to injure, what does not think of offending either in word or deed. The disposition of which Jesus Christ would speak comprehends therefore all at once sincerity, candour, gentleness, kindness. In this sense, simplicity is the companion of innocence, from which it is inseparable ; for it supposes that the person in whom it is found is not only without the will to injure, but that he has not even the thought of evil. Before the fall, Adam, our first parent, possessed that holy simplicity in its highest expression ; and the day when he lost this privilege of innocence, and when, in losing it, he robbed us all of it, was that when he put faith in that saying of the tempter : “ By eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. iii., 5.) Since that fatal moment, no one has come into the world harmless, because no one is born innocent. Corrupt from our birth in the innermost and primitive ground of our nature, we can recover what we have lost only by Christian regeneration ; for those who appear the best gifted in this respect in the order of nature, are very far from the simplicity to which they are to come by the operation of grace. As it regards the Christian, the thing is nothing less than to become a child ; it is to accomplish this great work that he

enters the school of Jesus Christ ; in the completion of this immense work consists his true grandeur and all his felicity.

Simplicity, according to the Gospel, extends to all the faculties of our soul, to all the parts of our being ; it produces itself and makes itself felt in all the acts of the life. There is in the spirit a certain rectitude which, without requiring to call to its aid reflection or calculation, discerns the true from the false, the just from the unjust, the good from the evil. There is in the heart a delicate instinct, an exquisite tact, which causes it to love and to seek after all that is pure, all that is true, all that is beautiful, all that is good. Looked at in relation to truth, simplicity receives its first impressions, its sweetest savours, its most fragrant perfumes, and in consequence its most powerful, most vivifying, and most salutary influence also, because it knows truth as it were by intuition, and tastes it, even before having reasoned on it, or thought of analysing its constituent elements. There is between simplicity and truth a point of contact, a family tie, a sort of homogeneity which leads to this, that the latter has only to show itself in order to the former recognising it immediately, welcoming it with joy and embracing it. Thus the heart, which is simple ordinarily, remains a stranger to doubt and the temptations of infidelity, for it can no more distrust the truth than it can God and man. As to God, the simple soul, regarding as serious the promises of the Divine word, commits itself to the direction of the Master, that all its knowledge may be confined to love and adoration ; it abandons itself, with a confidence altogether filial, to His good and wise providence and, rejoicing in the present, without being too much occupied with the morrow, the great matter with it is to think of the soul's immortal interests, and to do the will of God ; as to the rest, it believes itself entitled to reckon on the words of Him who has said : " Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

(Matt. vi., 33.) It is calm because it is confiding; and because it is confiding, it is not easily accessible to disquietudes or cares. If you observe it in the business of life, in its dealings with men, it has scarcely any need of fortifying itself against unjust suspicions, painful distrusters, rash and criminal judgments; for it believes good rather than evil, it supposes right intentions rather than reprehensible motives; it is neither exacting, nor in the habit of raising difficulties; and as it is mixed in this case with love, we may say of it what the great apostle of Jesus Christ said of the last: "It excuseth all things, it believeth all things, it hopeth all things, it beareth all things." (1 Cor. xiii., 7.) As it regards the things of life, simplicity possesses the precious and admirable secret of taking them as they come, of not confounding them when they are clear and such as may be expected, and of not complicating them when they are already sufficiently obscure or difficult of themselves. It is thus that it often passes through the most impenetrable labyrinths without embarrassment, whilst others go astray on the smoothest and most clearly traced paths. Is it necessary to add that in the language, the tone, the expression, the manners, simplicity avoids and shuts out everything stiff, affected, exaggerated; that it pleases because it has no design of pleasing, and that it is full of grace for this very reason that it is unaware of it. All that we have to say to you about simplicity, my brethren, is found admirably summed up in this saying of the Saviour: "If thine eye be single [by which we must unquestionably understand the eye of the soul], thy whole body shall be full of light; but if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. vi., 22, 23.)

We said just now that simplicity supposes innocence, and that innocence in its turn supposes the absence of evil in itself and in others. It is not the same with prudence. It supposes on the contrary the existence of evil in man and in the world.

This is so true, that in the midst of a world where sin did not reign, prudence would be unnecessary, or at least of little use. For it is essentially a virtue for fallible and sinful creatures, called to constant connexion with other creatures fallible and sinful like themselves. To make our way across this world without dashing against a thousand rocks there is needed therefore something more than simplicity: there is needed prudence, that is to say, the foresight which is composed of discernment and vigilance. Prudence is necessary for every one and at every moment. For of what is the society composed in which we are obliged to live? Of spirits and characters which are very different, and which we must learn to know; of tendencies and habits which we should not be able to ignore; of usages and customs to which we are not permitted to remain strangers; and relationships and duties in which each one of us has to take his part. Hence, to the Christian, the necessity "of discerning and trying the spirits, to see if they come from God" (1 John iv., 1); of guarding his heart more than any other thing which we guard (Prov. iv., 23); of using the greatest circumspection lest we fall from the grace of God. Itself corrupted, the world seeks to corrupt; itself seduced, it does the work of a seducer; its snares are numerous, its tricks skilful, its machinations oftentimes diabolical. Hence, to the Christian, the necessity of "conducting himself with circumspection" (Eph. v., 15); "of watching and praying lest he fall into temptation" (Matt. xxvi., 41); "whereas he who seeks danger will perish in it." (Ecclesiasticus iii., 26.) Itself unbelieving, the world hates a virtue which condemns its life, and, to impose on itself, heaps it with raillery. Hence to the Christian the necessity of "not giving holy things to dogs, nor casting pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend him." (Matt. vii., 6.) Itself wicked, because it is the enemy of God, the world has persecuted at all times those who belong to

Christ, and sometimes by hatred, sometimes by contempt, sometimes by punishment, sometimes by indifference, sometimes by injuries, sometimes by secret manœuvrings it has been able to make the true disciples of Jesus feel that there is between it and their Master war to the death, and unending hatred. Hence, to the Christian, the necessity of being "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and of clothing himself with the whole armour of God in order to resist the attacks of the devil." (Eph. vi., 10, 11.) In fine, being under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air, the world, believing a lie, seeks to accredit it and to spread it; and here the danger to the believer is less in monstrous systems produced by the corruption of the heart and the derangement of the imagination, than in concealed errors and pernicious doctrines, the authors of which have the mischievous talent of dissembling their artifice, and in those human opinions which borrow the mask of Christianity only in order to tempt the feeble and make them stumble. Hence, to the Christian, the necessity of "bewareing of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. xvi., 6); of "shunning the false prophets which come to him in sheep's clothing, but who are inwardly ravening wolves" (Matt. vii., 15); of "not being seduced by philosophy and vain subtleties, after the traditions of men and the elements of the world, and not according to Christ." (Col. ii., 8.) For all these reasons and for many others of the same nature, believers must have prudence as well as simplicity. That is why Jesus Christ did not confine Himself to telling them: *Be simple as doves*, and why He further commanded them to be *prudent as serpents*.

"One does not show one's greatness, to be in one extreme," says a profound thinker, "but by properly touching the two at once, and filling the whole space between them." It is not unusual, in fact, to meet with Christians who are simple without having prudence, as it is not more so to meet

with some who are prudent without having simplicity. But a simplicity tempered by prudence, and a prudence which does not shut out simplicity, that is perfection, and that perfection is not common. Now he is just as little conformed to the spirit of the Gospel who is simple, without having prudence as the one who is prudent without having simplicity; and the dangers are equal in the one case and in the other. Let us give some example of this.

For want of knowing how to unite prudence with simplicity, you may, by a badly enlightened and rash confidence in Divine Providence, reckon on a protection, on help, on a deliverance which, while having recourse to the assistance of your God, you ought to have sought by the right use of the means which He had placed in your hands; and thus you run the risk of not only creating for yourself inextricable embarrassments, of throwing your family into distress, of alarming the church, of compromising the success of more than one Christian work, but further of doing a considerable wrong to your soul and to your faith. For, deceived in your hopes, you will doubt; disappointed in your expectation, you will draw back; and from one surprise to another you will go on to question the fidelity and the veracity of His promises, when you should have taken only to yourselves the disappointments and humiliations which you have passed through. Who knows whether, in the case of more than one pious person, spiritual depression, a permanent state of distrust, a kind of melancholy, have not their source in a simplicity devoid of prudence?

From not knowing men and things sufficiently, from not possessing the secret of making yourself all things to all men, from not having the tact of choosing your means of action, and of applying them to different individuals according as their character, their tendencies, their dispositions are known to you, you may plead the cause of Christianity in certain

circles, propose the truth to certain persons, insist on the necessity of Christian regeneration before certain men, in such a way as to repel rather than draw them, in such a way as to clash with them rather than gain them to Jesus Christ. By acting in this way you excite prejudices, you strengthen an opposition which will turn, perhaps, into hostility, and pass one day into persecution towards the church. An imperial edict being torn by a Christian on the square of Nicomedia, was the signal of the most bloody persecution of all in the whole extent of the Roman empire. And in the sixteenth century some placards having been affixed without discretion to the gates of the palace of a French king, were the probable cause of the kingdom not professing to-day the evangelical religion.

From not using sufficient circumspection in our steps, from putting confidence too speedily and without sufficient evidence in the conversion of souls, carried away as some are by a laudable but indiscreet zeal, you depend on the first intriguer, you commit yourself to the first hypocrite ; and these abuse your credulity to draw you away to their conclusions, or to destroy you, to rejoice over you or to compromise you.

On other occasions the goodness of your heart leads you astray ; you meddle with affairs far too high for your capacity, and which you have neither presence of mind nor experience enough to execute ; you engage in what you cannot accomplish, in what you ought not to have commenced, and those who have seen you put your hand to the work, without being able to raise the building to its completion, say of you, as the mockers in the parable : “ This man commenced to build, and was not able to finish.” (Luke xiv., 30.)

At other times you hurry on what ought to have been done leisurely or by successive and gradual developments ; or in grave circumstances you propose expedients which you have not maturely weighed ; or you unite with men whose character

you have not sufficiently penetrated, and whose capacities for such and such duties you have not sufficiently proved ; or, once more, you promise a co-operation which you are not sure of being able to lend. And all that you do with the best intentions and with the most simple desire of advancing the interests of truth ; but of how many faults are people guilty in this way ! What injury has often been done to the truth by acting in opposition to the views of Providence, and by putting obstacles in the way of accomplishing His designs !

There are pious men who, from being shut up in the elevated regions of the spiritual things which compose their life, and with which their minds are exclusively pre-occupied, no longer attribute to human life that relative value, and give it, in the Christian life, that place which God permits, and intends us to grant it, for the interest of our own advancement and for the interest of our brethren. They are indifferent, or at least but ordinarily sensible, of a multitude of wants, miseries, and distresses of suffering humanity ; they would say that having become Christians, they are no longer concerned to be men, and they are seen every day committing upon themselves an intellectual, moral, social, and physical suicide, and with pleasure they look upon this new kind of suicide being executed in others : this is also an extreme.

There are other men, who, born without distrust, unable to suspect evil, but wanting that discernment so necessary in a world such as ours, habitually frequent societies, and diligently keep company with persons whose conversations, maxims, and example are pernicious to them. They have scarcely any doubt of it, and yet they submit to their sad influence ; and its result to them is a Christianity less intent, a piety without decision, which takes away from them all direct and efficacious action upon souls, by depriving the persons themselves of the blessings attached to fidelity : this is another extreme.

There are in fine some, who, having in view only the interests of God's kingdom and the salvation of souls, which exclusively and completely absorb their minds, are not always scrupulous in the employment of the means which they use to accomplish their purpose. Pressed as they are with the desire to enlighten the world, to edify the church, they do not always take into account certain proprieties and certain feelings which ought to be treated tenderly ; they do not always respect certain joys which evaporate, and certain griefs which are held to be unhallowed as soon as they are made to pass the threshold of the sanctuary, the heart, or the family.

These are some of the errors of simplicity unaccompanied by prudence ; but the excesses of prudence, without simplicity, are not less dangerous. Let us point out some of them also.

Whence comes it, my dear brother, that you show yourself so habitually overcome by the fear of not obtaining for everything that you do the approbation of a world which Scripture declares an enemy of God ? It might be said, from seeing you act, and hearing you speak, that you would like to be pardoned for being a Christian, and that you are much more anxious not to displease man than to please God, much more sensible of the favour of the world than of the approbation of Christ. Timid disciple, have then courage to belong to your Master. Cowardly soldier, blush then no longer to find yourself under the banner of your Leader. Constant deserter, unceasingly passing from the camp of Israel to that of the Philistines, and from that of the Philistines into that of Israel, put an end to your tergiversations, decide once for all. Renounce the chimerical hope of being able to take away from the cross an offence, and from Christ's service an opprobrium, which are to remain upon them, and have confidence enough in God to believe that with that offence, and in spite of that opprobrium, He will be able to make His work prosper more in you,

and about you, than with the puerile precautions and criminal provisions of your foolish wisdom.

In your case, my dear brother, it is against another kind of temptation that you have to arm yourself. You fear neither the opposition of the world nor its railleries. You have boldly raised the standard of your Master, and you prefer His livery to all the titles and all the glories of the earth. The zeal, the ardour, the devotedness, and the sacrifices of every day, and of every moment, nobly characterise your Christian career ; but whence comes it that by an inexplicable contradiction you so often imitate still the people of the world in your excessive circumspection, and in calculations bordering on adroitness more than on prudence, on finesse more than on wisdom ? If you had faith in the truth, would you have been seen wrapping up your steps in that veil of mystery with which you sometimes cover them ? If you had faith in the truth, would you choose roundabout or secret ways of reaching the object before your eyes ? “ Children of the light, let us walk in noon-day brightness.” (1. Thess. v., 5) Disciples of the truth, “ Let us cast far away from us the hidden things of shame,” (Rom. xii., 12,) and remember that in the Kingdom of God, as in everything, and through everything, the right way is always the shortest and surest, and that, to have the affairs of our Heavenly Father prosper and succeed, we must not turn them to our own advantage, we must not mix up with them our own self-love, our own will, our own personal views, our own particular systems.

Is it not, further, a pushing of prudence to excess, for a man to apply all the vigour of his mind to the accomplishment of a duty which, quite sacred as it is, may become a snare, and the source of perpetual unfaithfulness, if separated from others, and plunged into beyond measure ? May it not happen, for instance, that by dint of being pre-occupied with the interests of his house, the well-being of his family, the in-

crease of his property, he should surrender himself to these calculations, should plunge himself into cares which extinguish in his soul noble aspirations, which repress the flights of his love, and deaden that life of devotedness inseparable from the Christian character at all times, but especially at a period when there are so many miseries to be solaced, so many Christian and urgent works to be completed?

Is it not, further, to be prudent beyond measure, for a man to give too much attention to difficulties which the imagination likes to magnify, to susceptibilities from which he should be able to free himself, to considerations of mere human respect, above which he should have courage to raise himself? Does he not in this way allow to escape numerous and precious opportunities of speaking when he should speak, of acting when he should act, of striking an important and decisive blow at a given time, which will not, perhaps, be again presented in his life?

It is thus, my brethren, that in man everything is broken and piece-mealed, and his best virtues want that equilibrium which impress upon them the stamp of perfection. In God alone everything is united and harmonious, and for that very reason everything is perfect! You see, therefore, that Jesus Christ, who is our Model in everything, is especially so in this particular point. What wisdom there is in His character! what prudence in His whole conduct! How well He knows men, and how skillfully He can take advantage of circumstances! He does everything in the right time, and He does it always in the most becoming manner. He goes when He ought to go, He stops when He ought to stop. He never passes beyond the bounds of propriety, any more than He crosses the limits of duty. His answers are always dictated by the most correct discernment, and the most exquisite tact. They satisfy not only His adversaries' questions, which they resolve, or their objections, which they reduce to atoms; but

they are counterdrawn to their most secret thoughts, and adapted to their innermost sentiments. When His words would have only served to render His enemies more condemnable, or to furnish a fruitless nourishment to their indiscreet curiosity, He is silent; when He ought to speak, He opens His mouth, and the words which proceed therefrom on these occasions are so weighty, so full of authority, so powerful, so persuasive, that they disconcert the most rebellious. Call to mind His answer to the Pharisees on the question of tribute money: "Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's." (Matt. xxii., 21.) Read over again what He did when reproached with working miracles on the Sabbath, when, sending back His treacherous questioners to their own conscience, He asked them if, to keep from violating the day of rest, they could agree not to draw up their ox or their ass from a pit if it had fallen into it on such a day? Look again at the way in which He confounds the Sadducees when they questioned Him about marriage in the life to come, announcing to them that in that economy of glory, the elect will be like the angels of God. Go back in memory to what He said one day to a man who comes and asks Him to interpose His authority in a personal and family matter, and on another occasion, to the lesson which he gave a young man, who, full of confidence in himself, imagined himself able, by his works, to obtain eternal life.

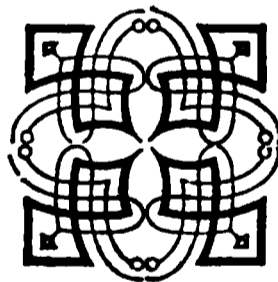
All these answers, and many others of the same kind, could be proposed as models of perfect discernment and of high propriety, were they not in the first place, and before all, examples of the purest and most sublime virtue.

And at the same time what admirable simplicity, what inimitable candour, what perfect sincerity, what invariable sweetness, what unalterable love, temper to our eyes this lofty wisdom and this prudence, always consistent with them-

selves ! Nothing is more natural than His piety, nothing more true than His sayings, nothing more unshaken than His trust, nothing more calm than His life, and, although constantly surrounded by enemies—enemies numerous, cunning, exasperated, malignant, and constantly armed against Him—He never loses anything of the tenderness of His character, or the ease of His deportment. It may be said that He was the most inoffensive and the least distrustful of men.

Let us aspire, my brethren, after that divine harmony, that highest beauty of Christian virtue, such as is traced out to us in the teachings, such as shines before our eyes with the sweetest effulgence in the character and life, of our beloved Saviour. In order thereto let us apply our minds to the understanding, and our wills to the accomplishing of these commands of Scripture : “ Be not children in knowledge, but in malice be children, and in understanding be full grown men.” (1 Cor. xiv., 20.) “ Let not your good be evil spoken of.” (Rom. xiv., 16.) “ Be wise as it regards good, and simple as it regards evil.” (Rom. xvi., 19.) Let us not, by a simplicity pushed to excess, give the world matter for laughing, nor by an exaggerated prudence excite just suspicions. Let gentleness not shut out in our case firmness, nor firmness gentleness. Let us be humble without losing the feeling of our human and Christian dignity, and in preserving the feeling of our dignity as men and as Christians, let us not lose our humility. Let us be true in love, loving in truth. Let us not cease to watch and pray ; and in that state of watchfulness and of incessant prayers let us wait calm and truthful. Let us rejoice in the liberty which the assurance of reconciliation in Christ gives, but may this liberty never degenerate into carnal security. Let us be always simple, constantly prudent. In this sublime agreement, in this holy alliance, is the peace of our souls, the restoration of our fallen nature, the glorifying of the name of our God.

O, my crucified Saviour, may I never be ashamed of Thy cross ; but at the same time may I remain simple and humble in the enjoyment of Thy peace ! And as Thy love is the knowledge of all knowledge, the “bond of perfection” (Col. iii., 14), and what alone can unite that which everywhere else but in itself is divided and mutilated, light and life, repose and activity, truth and charity, simplicity and prudence—shed abroad in my heart that love in order that by it I may be from day to day more “transformed into Thine image from glory to glory, by the power of Thy Spirit !” (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Amen.





THE VISION OF ELIJAH.

By E. BERSIER, *Paris.*

“ And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind : and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out.”—1 Kings xix., 11—13.

ONE of the most striking proofs of the sad ignorance which prevails in our country on the subject of the sacred Scriptures, is the levity with which people judge the God of the Old Testament. I do not speak here merely of that disparaging criticism which since the last century stands up against the most sublime scenes in the Bible, and without even seeking to comprehend their spirit, finds in them matter for low raillery ; I speak of a science which gives itself out to be more serious, and which wishes to be so, and I am struck with the prejudices to which it yields obedience. Thus, because Scripture, with an inflexible straightforwardness, with a holy candour, relates to us the weakness, the deceptions, the falls of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses, of David, of all those heroes of the Jewish people, whom national pride, if it had dictated this book, would have taken care not to paint under such colours ; these critics do not hesitate to trace these

sins and these crimes, even to the God who was worshipped, without asking themselves if He approves of them, without reflecting that He condemns them, and that their authors all passed through the painful and severe school of trial and bitter repentance. As a further example, because Jehovah, in His providential plans towards humanity, uses for a time the people of Israel as an instrument, subjects them to the yoke of the theocracy, and in consequence to a variety of laws forming one great whole, and which, like all civil and political laws, must be rendered obligatory by force, they pretend to see in Jehovah only the God of vengeance, they attribute to Him the weakness, the hatreds, and the bad passions which Israel mingled with the accomplishment of her providential mission, and they forget that even then, under the veil of the theocracy, His true nature, to wit, His universal justice, His love, His mercy shine in a thousand parts of the Old Testament, that all through it there breathes a gentleness and tenderness quite evangelical, and that by paying proper attention to prophetic teaching we feel ourselves as if already placed at the feet of Jesus Christ. What! because that God of Israel, revealing himself in His Son, has shed upon us His light in its fullness, shall we despise the morning beams with which He enlightened the ancient covenant? Should the light of day, in its mid-day splendour, cause us to despise the early dawn? No, my brethren, under the shadows with which the ancient revelation is surrounded, we adore the God of Abraham, of Moses, of Elijah, of David, for to us He is, and He ever will be, the God of Jesus Christ.

These thoughts were suggested to me by the narrative from which I have selected my text, and I do not hesitate to say, that by meditating on it, and seizing its true meaning, you will see there, like myself, a sublime presentation of that last revelation, the Gospel, by which God has been made known to us as He is.

This narrative is drawn from the history of Elijah. Elijah is the true type of the heroes of the theocracy. At a period of abasement, of abjection, of universal idolatry, he is possessed by the thought of the glory of God ; that passion consumes him, he knows no other. He would re-establish the kingdom of Jehovah, and in that mission nothing shall arrest his progress, not even the ties of flesh and blood. Like John the Baptist, who will be, nine centuries after, the heir of his name and of his work, he grows great in the desert. And when he leaves it it is to appear in the palace of Ahab, there to denounce the Divine threatenings ; his voice resounds like thunder ; the judgments of God accompany it ; and such is his power that the people, without any exception, hang on his word ; he sets at defiance the priests of Baal, unmasks their deceit, and has them slain without pity. Then he can believe that the reign of the Lord is come, for the people proclaim Him ; and, during the whole of the day, the echoes of Carmel resound with the cry of the crowd,—“ The Lord, He is the God ; the Lord, He is the God ! ”

But, oh, grief ! after the enthusiasm of a day, the course of this world recommences ; Ahab is Ahab still, Jezebel is Jezebel still, and the crowd, carried away for a moment by the fervour of the prophet, return with an insatiable ardour to the turpitudes of a sanguinary and voluptuous idolatry. Then Elijah, like all ardent spirits, passes from one extreme to the other ; discouragement seizes him ; his faith is clouded ; God escapes his notice, the ways of the Eternal are incomprehensible to him ; he complains that God has forgotten His cause. How easy it would be for Him to interpose, and crush those who despise Him, and thus complete the work of destruction commenced on Carmel ! But no ! the heavens remain closed, God keeps silence, Jezebel is powerful, and the prophet's life is threatened. Elijah, in despair, takes to flight ; his soul is weary of life ; he wants to go and bury himself in the desert.

He journeys towards the south, far, very far from that land of Judea where he had contended to no purpose, very far from that ungrateful and frivolous people; he journeys towards Horeb; that immense desert, those bare and desolate summits, the sad and savage scenes of nature answer to the state of his soul. It is there that he wishes to die, and, when the voice of God, which follows him to his very retreat, cries—"What doest thou here, Elijah?" He answers by a bitter wail, he reproaches God with having abandoned His cause, and, with having left him alone in the conflict, after having called him to the most formidable of struggles.

My brethren, let us not judge the prophet too harshly; even in his despair we recognise the ardour which devours him; his temptation is that of all grand spirits, spirits that are being consumed by a thirst after righteousness and holiness. Would to God that at the price of even errors like his, it were given us to see to-day believers resembling him!

Careless spirits will not understand that revolt of Elijah. As they have no elevated ideal to possess them, as the coming of the kingdom of God gives them very little concern, as the cause of righteousness and truth has never inflamed them, they make themselves easy about the course of this world; they have made up their minds that they are not able to change it. Wisdom, in their eyes, consists in taking men just as they are, and moderation appears to them the best and most prudent of all philosophies. Why should they wish to reform the world, why should they wish to excite against themselves prejudices and passions, when they may live in happiness and tranquillity? They call, therefore, everything that goes beyond them fanaticism, and the Elijahs, at whatever period they appear, seem to them fools. But let a man ardently desire the triumph of truth, let him suffer from seeing the name of God slighted, His glory abased, and His laws trodden under foot, then he will recognise in this narrative his

own history, and in the groans of the prophet the expression of his own grief.

Thus, I imagine, the Christians of the first centuries must have been tried, when, after having, with the whole of the primitive Church, waited for the immediate return of Jesus Christ and His glorious appearing, they saw the truth resisted and often driven back, and compelled to plead its cause before Cæsar; they saw the Church making progress with difficulty, and subject to the conditions of all human institutions, having like them its feebleness, its calamities, its decays, and reckoning, in many a persecution, its apostates by thousands.

Thus, to take another example, must our fathers have been tried, after the days of the Reformation, when, having longed, on behalf of their country, for the free and earnest religion of conscience liberated from the yoke of men, and that grand future which the Gospel alone could give, they had to see their temples razed to the ground, their homes thrown down, their Bibles torn up, and themselves driven, like malefactors, to exile. Who can tell what anxious looks these proscribed ones—and they were great men—cast to God as He seemed to desert His own cause! who can tell their mournful prayers, their complaints, their groans so full of bitterness?

Thus, in our own day also, those are tried, who, having hoped to behold with their eyes the triumph of the Gospel, the extension of the church, the union of Christians crowding to the foot of their Master's cross—one of those great religious movements, in fine, which save souls and the world—are reduced to see what we see, that is, in presence of an indifferent and usually scoffing world, the Church divided, feeble, without buoyancy, without enthusiasm, and the progress of the kingdom of God depending, in appearance, on external circumstances and altogether human causes. Then, in pre-

sence of such a spectacle, faith is shaken, hearts are troubled, they begin to doubt, like Elijah, whether God interferes and acts ; like Elijah, they forget the magnificent proofs of His intervention in the past, and if to these general causes of trouble there should be joined a particular trial, a lengthened wrong under which they groan, a cruel inexplicable blow, it is enough to draw from the strongest a cry of anguish and of complaint, and lead them perhaps to despair.

Christians, who know these temptations, you know, also, how terrible they are ; well let me nevertheless tell you, they are noble griefs ! Ah ! it would be worse to succeed in making up your mind to what takes place, to be at ease in a world where God is treated as a stranger, to see with an unfeeling heart those acts of injustice, those sufferings, those crimes which meet us at every step, to accept this life and this world as sin has made it. Happy are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, says the Gospel. Yes, to suffer like Elijah, like John the Baptist, like Paul, is still the best and grandest thing on earth, for it is on that condition alone that we can be comforted by God. You will see, in reality, how God instructs Elijah, and let us seek our own strength in it.

And God said to Elijah : " Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." The prophet obeys. Standing on the summit of Horeb, from whence his view embraces the desert and the heavens, he waits ; for the Lord is going to appear to him, and to speak to him,

He looks, and behold something is raising clouds of dust in the horizon ; it is the desert wind, which rises rapidly and impetuously, as in the East. Soon the heavens are covered with a sombre and livid veil. To long and dismal gusts succeed the roars of a thunder-storm ; the trees are twisted and torn up, the very rocks are shaken, the sand of the desert undulates in moving hills, like the waves of a furious sea. The hurricane passes ; but *the Lord was not in the wind.*

He looks again, and there is something which, to his troubled eyes, seems motion; the rocks are shaking, the earth within is heaving; the mountain, as if taken with giddiness, reels on its foundations; there is an earthquake, opening abysses where everything seems about to be engulfed; for some moments nature is the prey of that frightful convulsion; but *the Lord was not in the earthquake.*

Elijah looks again,¹ and lo, a strange light illuminates the expanse; the fire of heaven is falling. The red flame, blazing in the depth of that night of tempest, extends swiftly as light; it runs, it twines about the sides of the mountains, it sets on fire the dried herbs and the trees overturned by the wind. There is soon a deluge of fire which invades everything, and whose burning waves rise like whirlpools towards the dark vault of heaven. Elijah, terrified, draws back; but *the Lord was not in the fire.*

Did not the storm, the earthquake, and the fire present what Elijah asked for, when groaning and discouraged he reproached the Lord with his inactivity and incomprehensible silence? Had he not, as it were, said to Him:—"Reveal Thyself! Take in hand Thy cause, sweep away Thy enemies like the sand of the desert, crush them in Thy fury, consume them like stubble?" Well! he saw that irresistible and formidable power, in the hurricane that carried away everything under its rabid breath, and in the earth moved to its depths, and in the devouring fire. He saw it, he trembled; but the Lord was not there. Where then is He, and in what sign will Elijah be able to discover His presence? The prophet is about to know.

The terrible vision of the storm has passed. The blast of the tempest is stilled. To the convulsions of the earthquake succeeds the calm, to the terrifying glare of the lightning the pure and fresh brightness of day. Heaven reappears—the heaven of the East, with its transparent and deep azure;

nature seems born again more beautiful and serene, and from the valleys there rises to the top of Horeb, and the cave where Elijah had sheltered himself, a sweet and gentle sound—the harmonious voice of nature opened up afresh under the breath of God. Elijah goes forth from his retreat. An inexpressible emotion seizes his soul, which the terror had thrown into confusion, an ineffable feeling of peace, of freshness, and of joy penetrates it. Neither the voice of the tempest, nor the convulsions of nature had roused him to that point. In that sweet and gentle sound he recognised the presence of God, and, covering his head with his mantle, he bows himself and adores.

Is there not in this scene of the Old Testament a sublime presentation of the last and best revelation which God had to give to man by the Gospel?—That God, whose presence Elijah could discern only in acts of judgment and of anger, that God, strong in vengeance as long as He strikes and chastises, has not uttered His last word. He makes the winds His messengers, and flames of fire His ministers, but He is, nevertheless, neither in the tempest which overturns nor in the fire which consumes, and if the law of Sinai, if the theocracy of Israel have revealed to the world His holiness and His justice, He will one day reveal to it that His name is love.

Elijah will not yet comprehend the deep and true sense of that vision which goes beyond him, and in what follows the Lord reveals it to him but in part. He tells him in effect to set out on a journey, and go and join Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha, who will be all three instruments of His vengeance, who will soon chastise Ahab, Jezebel, and the idolatrous people. Hazael, Jehu, Elisha, are the wind, the earthquake, and the fire which the Lord will send when He will judge it good. Thus God will interfere, but it is necessary that Elijah should know vengeance will not be the last word He utters. In those terrible interventions God will not reveal

the whole of His character, and His true revelation is yet to come.

My brethren, we have contemplated that revelation. What is that good news represented by the sweet and gentle sound which the prophet heard? Lend a hearing, and in that night, the memory of which we celebrate,* you will hear the angelic song descending from the height of heaven upon the plains of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men." Go to that cradle where Divine Majesty is disarmed, contemplate that little child born among the poorest; no splendour surrounds Him; nothing removes you from Him, nothing terrifies you: everything there is plain and unpretending, yet the God of heaven and earth is really revealed there, and from that humble manger of Bethlehem will issue the salvation of the world. He will grow up, whose birth took place almost unperceived, according to the words of the prophet, like a feeble branch; He will have no external show, nothing to call to mind the terrible majesty of that God of vengeance whom Elijah invoked; instead of a sceptre of iron, dreamed of by the Jews, He will bear a reed; instead of the conqueror's diadem, a crown of thorns: His voice will not threaten like the thunder and tempest; it will proclaim pardon, peace, and salvation. He will say to all the sorrowful of earth: "Come unto Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." He will return upon His enemies only prayers, upon His executioners only benedictions. He will be abased, covered with insults, loaded with ignominy, and nailed at last upon the cursed tree; but in that extreme abasement He will reveal an unknown grandeur, that of victorious love, that of the charity which descends even to sacrifice. A majesty, to which nothing can make an approach, will surround His bleeding head, and in that dis-

* Preached on Christmas Eve, 1865.

armed victim man will recognise his King. What force, terror, and violence could not have done, His cross will accomplish; consciences will be moved, hearts will be touched, the church will be founded, a new human family will come into being, and commence the reign of God upon the earth; it will go on increasing, having for its motto, faith, hope, and love; it will invade the nations. After eighteen centuries it will preach the good news of salvation in all parts of the world, in the expectation of the day when on the pacified earth there will be but one shepherd and one flock. O, my brethren! in view of that wondrous triumph of redeeming love, let us bow our heads, and, like Elijah, adore; for the Lord is indeed here.

Thus we have seen the true meaning of that sublime vision, we know what that sweet and gentle sound signifies which filled the soul of Elijah with a holy trembling; we know that God is love.

And now it remains for us to draw from that scene some of the instructions which God has hidden there.

First and chiefly, let us learn not to judge the Lord. Often have we said, the delays of the Lord surprise us, His silence appears to us inexplicable. We ask, why does He not interfere? Why does He seem to abandon His struggling, attacked, and perhaps defeated cause? Why does He let evil triumph and extend? and, without avowing it with our lips, our irritated and impatient hearts invoke His interposition, His judgments, and perhaps His wrath. His wrath: ah! my brethren, Elijah, while invoking Him, did not know what we ourselves know; he had not seen the Holy and Just One expire on the cross; he had not seen mercy stronger than hatred conquer hearts, and lay the foundations of God's reign upon earth. His anger! and what should we have to answer if it reached us first? Do we deserve it less than those who provoke us? When we take into account the favours

which we have received, the light which has shone upon us, the patience which has borne with us, the deliverances of which we have been the objects ; when to that marvellous history of Divine mercies we oppose that of our resistances, our ingratitude, our cowardices, our secret faults, and perhaps our crimes, can we, my brethren—dare we—still call upon the God of vengeance? Let us rejoice rather that the hour of judgment is slow to strike, let us rejoice that to others as well as to ourselves there remains a time for repentance, a time for salvation. Let us remember that the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, and, to conquer evil, let us imitate that Divine Providence which, while able to subdue by force, proposes before every other means that of triumphing by love.

Alongside of that warning, I find in my text a thought full of consolation. Who is there who, in view of the history of mankind and of his own history, has not felt at times the shivering of doubt come over him, because he sought there in vain for the Divine intervention? Who is there who would not then have asked God His secret ; yes, *the* secret of those strange and mysterious ways which confounded him? Well! God reveals that secret in the vision of Elijah—that secret is love. Love is the decisive and highest explication of all that God does in the history of humanity and in our own history, —love and not wrath, love and not vengeance, although our hearts may at times think that it is not so. Yet, understand clearly, if it is only in love that God reveals the *whole* of His character ; nevertheless, it is He who also sends the wind, the earthquake, and the devouring fire. Because we believe in the Gospel, let us take care we do not on that account disarm the hand of the Lord, and make for ourselves a soft, effeminate idea of it, too much conformed to the spirit of this generation. No ! for us also, the Lord reigns ; for us He remains in the centre of history, commanding and willing the over-

throws which agitate this world. And are there not pages of history, where that interposition of His justice becomes in some sort visible, and when, like Belshazzar at his feast in Babylon, we discern a mysterious hand writing the death-arrest of wicked powers? When Nineveh and Babylon fall to the ground, when those gigantic cities sink down, do we not see there the intervention of God? When Jerusalem, the murderer of Jesus Christ, is trampled under foot by the Gentiles, when the plough passes over the site of their superb temple, and the fugitive Jews are driven about in the world, to astonish mankind by their unique and extraordinary destiny, do we not see the accomplishment of those frightful words—"His blood be upon us and upon our children?" When Rome, whose fall St. John, the seer of the Apocalypse, had announced four centuries before, is invaded by the Barbarians, and its destroyers, Attila and Genseric, in obedience to a mysterious destiny, call themselves "the scourges of God," and, when embarking, say to their pilot, "Let thy sail go where Divine vengeance breathes," can we overlook the action of an avenging Providence, and, if we forget it, will not the smoking ruins, which everywhere marked their course, proclaim it in our stead? When, in fine, we see in modern history all the powers that have made war against Christianity and driven it back, enter upon the fatal path to overthrow and death, whilst civilization and progress, regard for conscience and true liberty exist only under the shadow of the cross, and where the Gospel has reached the life of the people, we must be blind to deny that God acts even at the worst periods of history, and that it is He who unchains, as in the vision of Elijah, the destructive tempest and fire. Yes, the reign of God must be proclaimed on high, in the very face of a civilization intoxicated with its material progress, and which professes so scornful an indifference, so insolent a disdain towards the realities of the invisible world; it must be reminded that judg-

ment does not slumber, although it may seem to do so, and that to chastise the nations that forget Him, nothing more is wanted than to abandon them for a single day to the wicked passions which are at work deep within them, to that rising wave of materialism to which He alone can say—"No farther shalt thou go." It must be reminded that the corruption of manners presented by the upper classes, and introducing itself with an insolent luxury, stirs up in the lower sections savage hatreds and passions, whose explosion would produce a moral tempest before which that which Elijah contemplated on Horeb would be but a child's plaything. It must, in fine, be reminded that God is holy, that people cannot trifle with Him, and that, as regards individuals as well as communities, His judgments are the most certain realities.

Yes, God reigns in history; but, if we believe in His sovereign action, how many times also in history do we lose the trace of His steps! How many times is the spectacle which the world presents to us but a labyrinth, where we miss our way? And, even in His judgments how many things are there which appear inexplicable! Alas! in the tempest which the breath of His justice raises, I see the innocent struck side by side with the guilty, I see children expiating the crimes of their fathers, I see the consequences of iniquity pass upon several generations; I see a mysterious fatality fall upon individuals or people; I see strokes of force and cunning succeed while good causes perish; so that, knowing on the one hand that all these events, even those which confound me, are sent by God, I feel on the other, with no less evidence, that God is not there in the whole of His character! Ah! it is then that the vision which Elijah saw brings me a light which is beneficent and truly divine, for if it shows me that God sends the scourges which chasten the world, it teaches me at the same time that His chastisements do not reveal Him to us as He is, it teaches us that the secret of His ways is elsewhere,

that the whole of His character is to be found in that love which history cannot teach, but which God silently reveals to the pardoned soul of him who believes in His words, and is ready to be taught by Him.

Take hold of these consolations, ye afflicted ones. You groan, perhaps, to-day under the weight of trial ; it seems as if God had directed against you all His power, and in your life you have seen realised all that there was to appal in the vision of Elijah. The wind of affliction has swept away your hopes, your happiness has fallen down in a day of mourning, and your heart has passed through what Scripture calls the furnace of affliction. You have been told to seek God in those strokes which fall upon you, but your heart has shuddered, and, like Elijah, you still wait. Ah ! you are right, for if these trials have been intended by God, it is, nevertheless, not there that He will reveal His will and His innermost thoughts. Have faith ! the day is approaching when you will hear that sweet and gentle sound which struck the ear of the prophet, that secret voice of the Lord which alone appeases the soul in revolt, and brings to it ineffable consolations. You will hear it, and you will then know that love was at the foundation of all His dispensations, that love alone can explain your griefs ; you will know it, and, bowing with Elijah, and veiling your face, you will say : " Truly, the Lord is in this place."

My brethren, when Elijah had contemplated that vision on Horeb, the voice of the Lord was addressed to him, and said : " Return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus." Return ! These were the words which *he* had to hear, who in the hour of danger had deserted his post and his mission. Return on thy way to the wilderness ! On the way which he ought never to have taken, for it is not to the desert that God called him. Return to those before whom thou oughtest to bear witness of Me. Return to those places where hatred,

~~contempt, and persecution await thee. Return, for if I have strengthened thy faith, and raised up thy faltering heart,~~ by showing Myself to thee on the holy mountain, it is not that thy spirit may remain there plunged in ecstasy,—it is that thou mayest go more firmly and courageously to serve Me in that God-forgetting and perishing world.

Let us pay attention to that Divine order, and may it be our strength ; we have come here discouraged, perhaps, and groaning, like Elijah ; with him we have learned once more the secret of the Divine ways, but, happier than he, we have contemplated that love which Jesus has revealed to the world, and which is the most important word addressed to us, and the last explication of all that happens to us. Let us return then, my brethren, let us also return to the post of duty ; let us return to those lost souls, to that frivolous society, to that unbelieving world before which God would have us to be His witnesses. Let us return there to be while in it **humble, courageous, faithful** ; let us return there to bring to ~~it~~ **a revived faith, a brighter hope, a stronger and more persevering love.** Let us return there, and may that world learn, while listening to our words, while observing our works, that we have ascended, like Elijah, to the holy mount, and that we have heard the Lord there.





DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING?

BY DR. KRUMMACHER, *Berlin.*

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O, death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 Cor., xv., 54-57.

LISTEN to this shout of joy! How, waxing louder and louder, it breaks in upon the sounds of woe which fill the earth! Trumpet blasts of triumph over the last enemy! The morning dawn of life amid the night of the caverns of corruption! How illustrious the Gospel of God here appears in contrast with all the art and wisdom of this world! Who could refrain from hailing it with delight, from embracing it with rapture? See, it restores you your *dead*, it restores you yourselves out of the most frightful ruin. Blessed are they that believe! For *them* the memorial service of the dead shakes off the dark cypress-wreaths, and arrays itself with the evergreen of the surest and sweetest hopes. The angel who goes before the believer lets *not* the torch fall when the path of his life bends again towards the valley, but raises it now for the first time right up. Woe, on the other hand, to those who have fallen away from the faith! The commemoration of the dead tears in pieces a veil from off them also; but it is *that* which conceals the wretched condition

in which they are fixed. Of the one, as well as of the other, we will more closely convince ourselves, by considering, in accordance with our text, *death in a threefold relationship*, and, of course, first, *among the children of this world*; then, *in the conflict of redemption*; and, finally, *in the circle of the redeemed*.

You see that we do not even to-day go away from the natural range of our subject. May the Lord accompany our word with His blessing!

I.—Let your world first open up before us, ye children of this deluded century, whose barks, unconscious of their destiny, float away on the shallow stream of popular ideas, and for whom there is no more an infallible Word of God in the Bible, nor a Lord from heaven in great David's greater Son, nor a trumpet choir of the Holy Ghost in the prophets and apostles; but who have thrown around sun, moon, and stars of revelation the sackcloth of your unbelief, in order, in a strange freak, to grope your way on through this dark life by the *ignis fatuus* glimmer of a light *within* as it is called. Your world, ye crowds who stagger around a tree of liberty which, as has been long ago apparent, neither produces the fruit of peace nor that of holiness. Your world, over which the sound of the organ and church bell has almost already been silenced; but *one* bell—why have you not silenced it also?—sounds forth in strokes as strong as ever: the *bell of death*. You have had great success, we do not deny it. Scarcely any longer do you envy the bird in the air its wings, nor the fish in the water its fins. You have almost done away with space and time, accomplishing now in *one* day what once required *many*. Why do you not command time, also, to hasten no more away with your youth, with your life in its rapid flight? Ye who yoke the wildest elements like broken-in steeds, ye who dictatorially point to the lightning its paths, and who sway your sceptre over the stubborn power of nature,

why have ye not bound to your footstool the most frightful of all powers also, that one which, while you are boasting, "Now we have this and that," with more awful irony whispers to you, "But *I have you*;" and which, when it reaches you on its black-draped car of triumph, extorts, not only from the guards at your gate, but also from your soul, the token of deepest reverence in presence of its dreadful majesty? I speak of *death*. You are not *his* masters, he is *yours*. When you were being born, he laid an embargo on you. To no conqueror was his booty ever surer than you to *him*. Choose your ways as you will, you are ever on the march towards his executioners; and your lot is as the apostle (Heb. ii., 15) expresses it, "to be, through fear of death, all your lifetime subject to bondage." Death is that spectre which to your terror everywhere goes by your side; that bird of prey which hovers round you in every direction, and often throws the dark shadow of its raven wings with greatest force just where the light of the sweetest relationships and of the pleasantest hours would have blessed you. How precious the draught which fills the vessels of thy life, were it not, alas, embittered by the conviction: "It will not always be so!" How delightfully the tree of domestic happiness would flourish in thy abode, did there not gnaw it, like a deadly worm in its pith, the thought: "Even these sweet flowers will one day fade!" How sweet the fellowship of love and affinity in which thou livest; but ah, the heart-cutting dissonance in this fine harmony: "Even over these tender ties hangs the sword." Ah, the bitter, and joy-deadening truth: "Even these dear faces will one day grow pale like my own!" Death, death! —he is indeed the "*King of terrors*," and to what an extent! A more terrible majesty could scarcely be found. How he saddens existence, before he has even knocked at the gate or made bare his sword! And how terrible is he the very instant his steps are heard in your neighbour-

hood; when on your right hand or on your left he has already demanded his sacrifice; when he is breaking even the roses of spring in the garden of mankind, and felling in the forest the green wood, so full of hope; yea, sparing not even the darlings of men, and those whom they can least afford to be deprived of; or when, as in the cholera visitation, coming again from the East, he unrolls his dark flag in fell epidemics for the deliberate *slaughter of the people*, and sends before him, like the dull beatings of the drum, the tidings of his victories. How the awful solemnity of death makes itself then felt! you grasp on the right hand and on the left for weapons to arm yourselves as much as possible against so determined an intruder. But he delights in making sport of your trembling lance; or you act like the well-known desert bird, and think that if you veil your eyes in presence of your last foe, you will not be disturbed by him. But what is the result? In the midst of the intoxication of a merry-making company a vessel perhaps flies into pieces, or a picture falls from the wall, and (where there is not faith, *superstition* introduces itself) a trembling runs through you, as if at a short distance you saw death beckoning. Or would you try to escape by flying into the arms of a life full of dissipation; what would be the result? Suppose a feeling of sickness should suddenly come upon you, or something to remind you more strongly than usual of the flight of time, suppose in your immediate neighbourhood one in the fulness of his strength should unexpectedly break down, at once the monster grins upon you through the flower-covered walls of your existence, and how you tremble and stand filled with perplexity. Perhaps you seek in garlands of poetical flowers to conceal the terrible, and speak of "the guardian angel gently putting out the lamp of life," of the "brother of sleep who at last puts the weary pilgrim to bed in peace," of the "gentle rest of your ashes under the shade of the cypresses," of "reunion

in the smiling fields of Elysium." But these flowers of fancy, how soon they wither when the first breath of the cruel destroyer touches them. There is no poetry in death. Alas, it is a terrible *reality*.

"But thou mistakest us," I hear some one say. I know you are accustomed to draw from reason your so-called grounds for the immortality of the soul. You rely on its "nature," on its indwelling power to distinguish itself from the body, which is only its covering; on its innate longing after a continued existence on the other side of the grave; and on these arguments when in health you depend. But go with them into the presence of the dark destroyer himself, and what will your arguments avail? He regards your iron as straw, your brass as stubble. Visit the places where his work is going on, and try if, on the ground of your philosophical arguments, the cry will break forth: "Death, where is thy sting?" The stern destroyer will stare at you, and with sneering lips answer: "Where is my sting?—it is already in the secret trembling and uncertainty which the mask of your assumed heroic mien but badly hides; it is in the throat-rattle of these dying ones, in the gradual extinction of their consciousness, in the passing away of their breath, like the breath of every other creature; it is here, in these caverns of death and corruption, and had you the power to look deeper still, I would perhaps have shown you that there my sting extends also." So will death triumph; and, in presence of his unfolded terror will die, as you have indeed a hundred times already experienced, whatever reason has to offer in the way of comfort. Besides, it must also be confessed by you, ye children of this world, to what end reason in the course of her thinkings has proceeded. Immortality, according to the last results of its inquiry, is a "fancy," what lies beyond a "dream," and signifies only the eternal duration of the *human race*, but not of individual men. And you also are in the end

compelled by the force of your own principle to let yourselves be transported to the naked and comfortless height of that last conclusion; so that the sting of death in your case is ANNIHILATION, and you fall, as regards your persons in death, into the arms of a stranger, who not only flings your body into the jaws of corruption, but also extinguishes your spirit, and therewith destroys you altogether. Say then, ye who swim with the stream of the newest philosophy of the age, is not death your absolute master, and are ye not his slaves ?

II.—“ It is true ! ” you confess. “ But who can be a match for death ? ” Who ? Do you wish to know ? Follow me to the territory of God’s works of grace, and to another battlefield than that on which you are standing : *into the conflict of redemption*. Or have you never heard of any such thing ? then come and see; there stands the Hero armed for the defeat and destruction of every hostile power. There He stands, by His appearing already a plague to death and a destruction to the grave. On His brow it is written that He came out of another world into ours, and that what lies beyond is therefore no fancy, but a real truth. He drops scarcely a word on this subject, treating it as a subject which of itself is understood. We hear Him, in whose mouth no deceit was ever found—only once—remark, that no one can kill the soul ; and, on another occasion, in relation to the long dead patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that God is not a God of the dead but of the living, as all *live unto Him*. He considers this a matter so determined already by the sure word of prophecy, and still more by His own presence, that it is confessedly difficult to find direct utterances about the immortality of the soul from His mouth. And even when He goes to the graves and biers of the dead, and with *one* word of command calls back departed spirits into their soulless abodes, this is done not so much to give us proof of the ex-

istence of the soul beyond the grave, as to show Himself the Divine One. We certainly hail His words and deeds with joy and exultation, because in them our last doubt dies away, and our horror of annihilation is completely destroyed. Yet what would it have helped us had Christ only so far taken the power from death as to have delivered us from doubt, if death nevertheless were still able to destroy our hope of happiness? Then would annihilation have been better than life; for it is the least of the terrors of death that it separates soul and body from one another. Its peculiar sting lies in this, that it is God's messenger of judgment to us as sinners; "for it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment:" and hence death places us, naked and stripped of every ornament, at the bar of the throne, which burns as a pure flame of fire. "What speakest thou?" do you ask, terrified. I speak thunders which roll not only through the whole book of revelation, but also—only listen—through thine own conscience. Paul is right:—"The sting of death is sin; the strength of sin is the law." Had we been free from sin, we should not have died, and had we died, death would have had no terrors. But now that we are sinners, it is our sin which arms death against us and makes it frightful. And were there no positive divine law, our sin would not be so sinful and damning, because it would not then bear on it the character of a direct assault on God and His order, and a positive curse would not have been pronounced over it. But under the sound of the divine, "Thou shalt and thou shalt not," and of the "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," sin becomes desperately sinful, and it is the law in its majesty which, forced by the presence of sin, surrounds death with the judicial purple. Would you see death in this terrible pomp? See how it seizes the rich man in the parable; and the unhappy disciple after whom, as he goes out, sound the fearful words of the Lord: "It had been good

for this man if he had never been born." But what death was to those two, it would be to all of us. "How?" you ask in amazement. Yes, to all of us without exception, if death had not lost the great and bloody battle on the battle-field of Golgotha.

It was death with whom the Divine Hero struggled there from morning; death, which is the wages of sin, and over which, as the apostle says, the devil has power. For had there not been *this* death, how could the Lord have been able to say: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" How could He then, whilst the bloody sweat of anguish pressed out of His veins, break out into this groaning: "My soul is troubled even unto death;" and how find occasion for the complaint: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Oh, what a world of terror must it have been, into which He saw Himself carried away. Death seized Him, shook Him, laid Him in the dust; but this was only death's own death, for in the heart of the Holy One death left behind his sting as it regards all whom the Holy One represented. Eternal justice demands no more a payment from *us*, which He fully paid, and for whom she herself on the third day wrote so glorious a receipt. Consider the event in whatever light you will: as resembling judicial proceeding among men or more spiritualised, according to the entire tenor of Holy Scripture it stands incontestably firm that Christ, through the mysterious act of His free self-surrender for all who enter into life-communion with Him, has objectively atoned for sin, has taken away the sentence of damnation, has turned the same into a sentence of grace, and thus has disarmed even death, the king of terrors. In this real taking away of sin and Divine propitiation the work of the Lord towers to its summit. Cut *it* off and you have laid waste the innermost nature of the whole of Christianity. The unbelief which denies it rests not on grounds of scriptural

exposition, but principally, if not wholly, on mistakes about the true nature of sin, and the holiness and inviolability of the eternally binding law of God. Those who deny it want moral earnestness—they want the disposition to give hearing and place to the voice of conscience, should that of God's word be passed by,—they want the honest will to consider relationships as they are. Man seizes at fig leaves, he excuses himself, and tries in the way of cunning self-persuasion to settle matters with the law. For as soon as any takes courage freely to open his eyes to the shining and burning light of God's holiness, and is in earnest about the fulfilling of His commandments, he also discerns the absolute necessity of a mediation and atonement, and clasps this with joy, as soon as it rises in the heavens of the Gospel like a sun in the night. The Bible doctrine of the vicarious atoning work becomes already and again honourable in his eyes like the other doctrines, all of which he can pre-suppose, and in which he finds support. To our German evangelical church, in its believing members, a new struggle is ordained, a struggle for the altar and home of the whole of Christianity on earth, a struggle which has often been allotted to it already, and to which it seems to be peculiarly called. Three hundred years ago there was one power disturbing and darkening the position of evangelical doctrine, and against it she was called to contend. Now there is a power which menaces that doctrinal position with complete ruin, yea, considers it no more than a fancy, and denies it. The torch of battle is kindled and blazes everywhere. Stillness and silence are no more to be thought of. Minds must conflict with one another. The contest must be fought out and that thoroughly; God grant that it may. The tumult goes on; but what of that? Rents take place here and there; how can it be otherwise? Church authorities would have taken measures for the establishment of peace; but they cannot wonder if they do not attain their

end. Fought out, I say, the conflict must be according to God's counsel for the world. We will go on to conquer, gloriously to rescue the attacked principles, and for all nobler souls who feel their need of salvation *the* doctrine also, that Christ, as our substitute, has slain death, has swallowed it up in victory, and especially that He *thereby* has taken away its sting for us, and buried it in His own heart.

III.—Do you desire to see the *fruit* of the great redeeming conflict which has been won, come to the circle of the happy ones whom the good star of a living desire for salvation led to Christ. As you, afar off, approach this orb, what sounds already float upon you! Listen: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" Listen: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ." Listen: "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." And how the resoundings of joyful confidence sound still louder. The last enemy was certainly not yet destroyed even for *this* circle. Even here the word still remains in force: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Yet, how has the king of terrors changed his form as it regards them! The monster showing his teeth, with his thousand terrors, has gone from off the scene. An angel of redemption, with his hand stretched on high, and a star on his head, appears in his place. Oh! how blessed the love which reigns in this circle: they know that they are united for eternity. How peacefully tears are shed here when any one has departed: through the sobbing of the heart there sounds victoriously, the cry, "We shall soon see one another again!" With what courage we journey on; though a banner floats before our quiet course, showing the inscription, "Here we have no abiding city, but we seek one which is to come." How easily we pass through the nights and needs of the journey: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning!" When so

prepared we can behold grey hairs gather over our heads : the churchyard flowers, which there shoot forth, tell us also of the nearness of the eternal spring. With what fullness of anticipation we can gaze upon the darkening firmament : "In my Father's house are many mansions," He said, who came from above. How endearingly we think of those who have gone home, as though they had not departed from us, but sit waiting for us in another room. And how intimately we have at all times intercourse with them in spirit, as though they still hovered about us, yea, as though we saw them face to face. What is it that separates us from them, but only a slender, light veil of clouds.

Behold a man, mortal like yourself, bound by tender ties like yourselves to life. He is approaching the place where the wind plays with the leaves of withered garlands, and before which you are wont to be greatly afraid. But before this battle-field of death he is not terrified. With erect head and firm step he treads it. And as he walks through the awful domain the terrors which at other times encamp there have vanished away. To him it is as though right and left there were only the rays of the morning dawn, and, as though clear trumpet clangs pealed over the hills, instead of dull mournful wails. He reads on the stones here and there well-known names. To him they are not dead sounds : for him they are beings known in other spheres : for him all still live who have died in the Lord : for him angels watch at their quiet graves. He takes the dark cypresses from the hills and strews them with garlands of immortality. He shudders not even at corruption. He falls not back trembling at the question, "Son of man, can these dry bones live ?" Having leaned on the staff of the eternal word, he sings in view of his own removal : "Seed, sown by God, to ripen in the time of harvest." He raises up the sign of the cross, and sees in spirit death, devil, and hell flying away before it. Who is

this man with the cry of holy defiance upon his lip: "O death, where is thy sting?" He is no picture of the imagination. Nor is he any kind of seraph. He is a mortal man and a poor sinner like thyself; but one who from the depths of his heart believes on Jesus Christ. As he stands, so mayest thou also stand. The surrender of thine entire being to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life is the way to this goal. Why wilt thou delay to close with Him? Thou seest this man's gospel produces not dastards but heroes. It does not bow thy head to the earth, but raises it up. It does not embitter life, but plunges it into a joy of which the *world* has no idea. It does not create thee a slave, but leads thee to the highest freedom, and makes all thy foes thy footstool. Oh! give then place to this Gospel in thy heart, in order that in *thee* also it may become a *power of God* and a *life*, and gird thee and make thee strong, in view of everything which surrounds thee with terror, enabling thee to appropriate to thyself the victorious saying of the apostle: "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Amen.





AN ESTABLISHED HEART.

BY DR. THOLUCK, *Halle.*

“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”—
HEB. XIII., 9.

THE complaint is sometimes made that in our day there is a want of *strong men*, and of *intrepid minds*, and I doubt not that the *unsettled faith* that prevails as to *the word of God* is the reason why *courageous and firm hearts* are so few amongst us. Let us take this truth deeply and thoroughly into consideration. That firmness of faith is wanting is a fact which no one can deny: a state of things has commenced such as there has not been at any former period. Once there was a certain time of life when people fell into doubt—that was the time of youth. Now you see doubt *awaken* in youth; you see the old man who dies without having an advocate with God, and before whose view eternity, to which old men formerly looked forward as a secure haven, lies like an unsettled and flowing sea. Once doubt was confined to the male sex: now you see that gentler sex, to which nothing but faith in an invisible world communicates true nobility and true tenderness, driven about on the same stormy waves, where, at other times, only men were engaged in conflict. Once doubt might have entered the hearts of those to

whom the deeper knowledge of the holy record was closed : now, oh, woe to the time ! the stewards of the mysteries of God have come to doubt, whether they have any *divine mysteries* to dispense ! And it is but too often the case that people tormented with doubt must go away with distracted hearts if they seek rest on the breast of their spiritual shepherds. Once doubt or unbelief seized particular lands at times of Divine chastisement : now it has gone through all countries of Christendom. Is recovery from such a state still possible ? Brethren, it is. A sacred voice says : “ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” That is the marvellous part of our religion. As the seed of corn in the earth seems wasted away for ever, and yet raises itself up with new covering, so Christianity had gone down in the time of superstition ; but it rose again in the sixteenth century : so it had gone down at the time of the pseudo enlightening which extended to our day ; but a breath of spring has gone forth among the nations, and many flowers bloom, and many among you have been visited by this heavenly influence. That an established heart is a precious treasure, you all feel deeply. None of you have come here with the cry of Pilate : “ What is *truth* ? ” as if you had doubts whether there is a kingdom of truth. If any of you must still ask the question, it is only because he longs after truth, and desires that amid the manifold forms in which it is presented he may discover the right one. Let me speak to you, therefore, as to those who have the germ of a more delightful time in the church : “ *It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace ; not with meats which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.* ” Our subject is : *Establishment of heart.* (1.) *How good it is,* and (2.) *By what means it is secured.*

We will, therefore, first consider how good and precious it is to have the heart established. Wherein lies that silent charm with which nature binds us to herself ? It is the still,

uniform course, the inner oneness and rest with which her phenomena unfold themselves to our view. No doubt it is also a fine spectacle when the storm lashes the winds and waves, and the tempest bends and breaks under its wing the trees of the forest; but consider, my brethren, should there reign in nature an eternal storm? Who can bear even the very thought? There is then also in the kingdom of grace a charm, which resembles that of nature, and it is the charm of an established heart, a heart calmly resting in God. I will not detain you with inferior representations, in which you may behold this charm in a smaller degree; let us at once look at the King of the spirit world! What else is it that communicates to the Saviour such nobility, such grandeur, subduing everything before it but this immovable firmness of a spirit resting in God, from which words and deeds proceed, pure, calm, and self-consistent, like rays which the sun emits? The establishment of heart of which we speak is the union of divine *freedom* and divine *power*. Whom do we call *free*? We call him *free* who is not dependent on anything outside himself. Are you free in this sense? There are two tyrants under whom men groan, and if you have not broken their yoke, it avails you nothing to throw the yoke of all others off your shoulders. The first tyrant, under whom you groan, is *the opinion of the people*. It has, indeed, at all times exercised a strong influence, but never so despotical as in our time. How many men are now to be found who, let the decision of God and of their own conscience, and nothing else, decide as to the course of their life? You bow yourself humbly, you can bring great offerings, you can keep secret your holiest convictions *only to avoid the condemnation of the people!* “*What would the people say about it?*” Is not that the first question? Why is your Christianity still loose or lukewarm, why are you wanting in decision? Oh! it is for this reason before every other, *you fear the judgment of the people!* you are nothing of

yourself, and *on your own account*, you are all *through others*, and *on account of others*, how can *you* be free? The second tyrant is the *sensual life*. What should you all be,—ask yourselves sincerely, my brethren—if out of your own soul you should determine your course without being dependent on the consideration of good or bad days according to the flesh? Immortal soul of man, under what slavery thou art of sunshine and rainy days through thine own covering, and all its frailty and infirmities! Thou hast entered the temple of the Lord: the holy sounds of music, the praying assembly, the word of the Almighty have drawn thy heart to heaven; “Eternity is my home,” has sounded in thy breast: thou goest out, a feast of joy beckons, and, thou art caught! Immortal soul of man, under what vile slavery thou art by that which is far beneath thee! How canst thou be *free*? But shall we come to perceive freedom in its innermost principles, if we consider it only as independency of what is *without* us? How now, if this *self*, from which all decisions proceed, and which brings into subjection everything external, if this very self is in bondage to a foreign power? There is a condition of being independent of everything external to us, in which we come to decisions of ourselves alone, and *yet have no freedom*. Have you ever observed those characters, for whom their own *ego* is the only ground and the only aim of their determinations? Do they sit on thrones? They decide, indeed, of themselves, but are they *free*? The only free man is he *who has become free in God from his own self also*, who has acknowledged as his true innermost self the divine image which was given to all of us at our creation. As long as this does not guide thy decisions and rule in thee, thou servest a foreign power. *Thou art only a slave, even did all creation round about thee lay itself at thy feet*. Would you see that divine liberty, which is revealed in an established heart, behold it in the King of the spirit-kingdom. Hear Him say: “I do alway the will of My

Father which is in heaven." "Father, not My will but Thine be done!" King of kings, behold Him kneeling before His disciples to wash their feet, and bowing His head on the cross.

Where there is this freedom, there is also *divine power*. Power is the capability of *executing what we have set our minds on doing*. It is the natural consequence of freedom. Am I free, so that nothing coming from without can bind me, I have also the power of executing what I have determined to do. Let me determine, moved by nothing without me, and all my action is subordinate to a single aim, and this aim stands unmoved before my eyes. But that is just what gives emphasis to all action. For such power we long, we should like to reign over nature, over our body, over everything outside us. And the desire is well founded, for to the image of God belongs also *power*, and the *man* is called by way of preference in Scripture the image of God (1 Cor. xi., 7); on account of the power which distinguishes him from the female sex. It also comes to pass in every place where such an ever self-consistent power appears, a power exalted above every opposition, that we bow before it as before something super-human. But, O, my friends! what a difference between this power, as that of a heart chained to the *me*, and a heart made free in God! The power chained to the *me*, and drawing its nourishment from that source, you have seen make its appearance in the history of a man before whose will everything was to have bowed; you have seen it march over millions of dead bodies, so that under its feet three parts of the world trembled, and from the heads of kings their crowns fell. Oh! how dreadful is *power without love*! We may imagine on the side of such men a kingdom extending over all mankind, but it is the kingdom of the dark world. Such power, however, has never once been *enduring*: it is strong as long as it marches forward in victories; but let success

begin to withdraw, and it speedily falls. Whereas no victory, given by *God*, has ever come to an *end*. My friends, there are in the life of that man, be he ever so powerful, who is without God, moments of an inner faint-heartedness, when it is as if the ground shook under him; moments of an inward insecurity, when he feels as if every stone under his feet were a surge of water. Oh, how different the power of a heart that has been made free and strong in God! How *comfortable and happy* we feel when we first stand alongside of such power! Would it not terrify thee to walk by the side of a mortal man, who, thou knewest carried the lightnings of heaven under his garment, and whom the storm and billows serve as his slaves? But with what happiness and freedom from care did John lean on the breast of that only One whose power of omnipotence was a power of pure love! And so it is still. To godly men, whose love is as great as their power, weaker men cling as eagerly as the child in the storm does to the bosom of its father; and, oh, I know it, in the hearts of all of you there dwells the longing desire that there might but meet you in life those strong souls who have been made so by love; gladly would you throw yourselves on their bosom. And, God be praised, they have not yet become extinct in the Church of Christ. Hadst thou to seek them even in the dwellings of paupers, or at the ploughshare, they are not yet extinct. Would you behold the power of divine freedom, look at it in the *King of the spirit kingdom*. The hour of His Father is the rule of all His steps. On the divine clock of the world His eyes rest, He never becomes uncertain; from the first hour till the last, He is equally certain of victory. In the darkness of the garden, and in the presence of His three friends, He pays His debt to the weakness of human nature; but like the moon, obscured for a moment behind the clouds of night, He immediately comes forth again, and His light no more goes down.

Now it is the *unity* of such divine *power* and *freedom* that makes establishment of heart so precious. Do you long after it? I know you do: you who through lengthened nights of suffering have felt your heart melt under the heat of trial, and you who see before you a life in which are seducers and tempters on the right hand and on the left, bent on bringing about your fall, oh, I know you long for it; and you, also, who must confess that on your inward heaven sunshine and rain just as often change places, as in the heaven outside and above you.

Well now, learn *how such firmness is brought about*:—"with grace," says the apostle. He adds:—"Not with meats," intending to say, not through dependence on any outward work. When he says, "with grace," it is as if he said, "through faith in the grace which is offered in Christ." Let us, therefore, consider how establishment of heart is gained through *faith*, and especially through faith *in grace*.

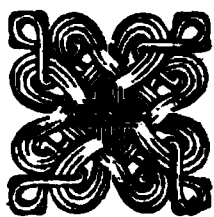
If there is nothing established and firm in heaven, nothing can ever be established here on earth. As the traveller, in a dark night, stumbles and falls, when from above moon and stars no more cast their light down upon him, so does man, when no light from the upper world shines upon his path. Imagine the great supports and levers of human life gone: that faith in a supreme Lord, who holds in His hand the measure by which all words and works of all beings in heaven and on earth are measured, and the faith that a time is coming when this measure will be applied, and where is then the standard and aim of all human action and conduct? Imagine the thousand passions and impulses which then, like surging waves, will break within man's breast; imagine these dissevered from the ties of faith in a holy God and an eternity, and the world becomes a hell. Would you picture to yourselves hell itself, what other picture have you for it than

nature unchained in the tempest, the fire of heaven wrestling with the trembling earth, the water in conflict with the storm, billow rising against billow, and the law of heaven, which had bound all together, torn in pieces. Oh, let us bring praise and adoration to the ever-merciful love which never has permitted the last glimmer of light to be extinguished, but which shines from heaven into every human heart that comes into the world. Go into the surrounding countries to the poorest races on earth, and were it but as a faint flash of lightning darting through the masses of clouds, you will find *something* of that light everywhere. But you feel that the human heart needs something more than merely an uncertain lightning flash. You believe in God: *why does he not rule your life?* You believe in eternity: *why have you thrown out no anchor on that shore to hold your vessel fast?* Because these truths only touch your inner man like a transient lightning flash; because they do not stand like suns above your head. And why is this? *Because you do not undoubtingly believe the testimony of Him who was in the bosom of the Father, and who proclaimed it to us.* But if you will believe this testimony of God and eternity, then your scattered thoughts and senses will return from their dispersion, as into a holy temple; then all your wandering powers will collect as around a sacred hearth and home; then you will become one with yourself, you will know what you *should* do, and hence know what you *will* do.

Yet how, if a man knows what he *should* do, but *cannot* do it? How, if he has *contended like a man*, and like a man been overcome? How, if when he looks into the past he sees *guilt* there, and if he looks into the future sees no *sure victory* there? Behold a new dispersion of his powers! Did you ever arrive at a time in your life, when you were led to doubt whether you ever *could* be and do what you ought? Many of you, perhaps, have not. But only because you have not come to the knowledge and consciousness of what you should have

done. You have tried yourselves by a measure which *you have set yourselves*, but which was not set by *God*. But whoever has measured his duty by the *divine* rule, and contended *without Christ*, for him a time must also have come when no word of Holy Scripture seems truer to him than that of the apostle: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Times will come when even the pious man—the pious man in the Christian sense of the word—will be led for the first time into the depths of this saying; then there is a new breaking up of all unity of the mind. Thou dost lose the courage and gladness to look up to thy God, thou dost lose what Scripture calls, "access to the Father." O, poor soul! then thou art going about in the wrong way, like a lost sheep, which has no shepherd, and the Psalmist's words must come upon thy lips: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." It becomes then clear that if the heart is to be established, there must be added to faith in God and eternity another faith still, *faith in grace*, a faith of which the apostle speaks in our text. This firm, immovable faith in grace is an indispensable, essential attribute of the disciple of the Lord. Without it no establishment of heart is at all possible. My dear brethren! If the view of heaven is not always open to the inner eye; if the wall of separation between the sinful heart and the Father in heaven is not fully removed; if there is not in its full extent what the apostle calls "access to the Father," when he says: "Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand;" if there is not this, then estab-

lishment of heart is impossible. *The consciousness of the Atonement is the spiritual bath of the soul*, where it alone gathers strength. If there is not that, then the accuser of human souls has our hearts in his hand, and casts us about hither and thither. Then sad thoughts come like the shadows of night, then doubts come like storms, and the solemn utterances of Holy Scripture like wrathful lightnings. In fine, as Luther says: "The human heart which is without Christ is, and must ever be, driven about in such doubt, terror, and trembling, as not to know where it will end." But with faith in grace, believe me, even the weakest and poorest among you may secure that establishment of heart about which I have preached to you. Seek it then, thou smoking flax; seek it, thou bruised reed. Oh! that many might go forth from this assembly, to whom people might be able to point and say: "Behold what strength *faith in grace gives men!*"





THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

By E. BERSIER, *Paris.*

*“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—
Matt. xxviii., 20.*

ID I not believe in the divinity of Christ, I confess that the words which you have just heard would fill me with astonishment. Imagine, in fact, a man, the greatest and holiest of men, or imagine an angel, the first of angels, ending, as Jesus here does, the mission which he had received to evangelise the earth, what would be, what should be, his last words? Ah! the holier and more elevated in the scale of beings he should be, so much the more would he have an unbounded idea of God's greatness, and dread to lessen it by usurping any part whatever of the adoration and love which are due to God alone. Anxious to direct towards God the regard which had been fixed on His messenger, he would have made haste to blot out the last trace of his own name, and to conduct his disciples to the Lord's feet, by saying to them, with John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

What did Jesus Christ on the contrary say? “Lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.” Have you thought of all that these words signify? The chief Shepherd would embrace in one last adieu all that can strengthen and comfort the souls of His disciples; He would

prepare them, who are nothing, to conquer the world ; and, to make them capable of this, it is not to the Father alone, it is to Himself that He sends them ; it is Himself that He proposes to them as the object of their regard, the centre of their thoughts, the perpetual source of their hopes, of their strength, and of their consolation. “ Go, for I am with you, with you every day, with you till the end.” Suppose, then, a man, or any creature whatever, daring to assume such a character, and to put himself thus till the end of time in the place of the living God ! My brethren, if these words do not issue from the lips of God, let us have the courage to say it : he who utters them is a usurper. Thenceforth, his humility must be no longer spoken of ; he must no longer be proposed for the admiration of men, for he has yielded to the most unpardonable ambition.

As far as we are concerned, who accept this promise as that of the Master whom we adore, let us endeavour to comprehend to-day its depth and extent ; and may God grant us at this hour, when we are supported with the Saviour’s presence in the midst of His people, to feel in our hearts its powerful reality. We shall have in that, there is no doubt of it, the best demonstration of my text.

“ I am with you alway.” Would you see the immediate accomplishment of these words ? Fix your thoughts on those very persons to whom the Lord addressed them on the Mount of Olives. I venture to affirm, that the apostles never enjoyed the presence of Christ more than from the day when He left them.

Before, it is true, their eyes saw Him ; they contemplated His miracles, and were enraptured with them. They had seen Him, with a gesture, calm the furious sea, or call Lazarus to the land of the living ; they had seen the bread multiplied under His hands, and multitudes satisfied ; and yet did they believe ? Alas, so little, that to the humiliation of

their Master, and the momentary triumph of His enemies, they cowardly dispersed and took to flight, while the boldest of them afterwards denied his Lord before a poor servant.

How comes it to pass, then, that since Pentecost these men, till then timid and trembling, come down into the public place ; that these fishermen of Galilee do not fear to go out in the presence of the sophists and cleverest men in Jerusalem ; that they confound them ; that they make the Festuses and Agrippas tremble on their judgment seat ; that they brave threatenings of punishment, and manifest their joy in opprobrium and suffering ? Whence comes that strength ? It is because they are no longer alone ; Jesus, revealed by the Holy Spirit, is with them. No ! when they saw Him with their eyes, when they touched Him with their hands, Jesus was not so much present with them as since they have contemplated Him only in spirit, and with the eyes of the soul.

Before, it is true, when they followed Him on earth their ears heard Him. Oh, incomparable privilege ! What conversations were theirs, and how their soul ought to have preserved a deep feeling of them ! How clear and luminous divine realities ought to have appeared to them in those simple parables which the Master explained to them Himself ! How they ought to have been subdued by the sovereign authority of those words falling all the way from the highest heavens upon the conscience, and imprinting there the very seal of their divine origin ! Yet, see them question the Master after His sublime instructions. What slowness to believe ! What prejudices ! What gross and carnal reasonings ! How badly they comprehend what Jesus teaches them, and how quickly they forget it !

Whence comes it that, later on, everything is cleared up to them, and that instead of disciples slow to believe, I see masters, at whose feet the Sauls of Tarsus and the Apolloses

are seated like docile children? Whence comes it that the sayings of Jesus appear to them brilliant with evidence, and that, comprehending them for the first time, they astonish in their turn the crowds, and hold them chained upon their lips? Whence comes it that these Galilæans, whose narrow and gross prejudices make us smile, translate their Master's thoughts into their discourses and their letters, with such a depth of intelligence and of unction, that the Church of to-day can, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, bend and drink at the inexhaustible source of life and of holiness which they have caused to gush forth in the world? Whence comes all that? It is because they are no longer alone; Jesus is with them. There is realised the strange saying which He had addressed to them in His last conversations: "It is expedient for you that I go away." On that departure depended the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost came, and then that grand miracle was wrought which explains everything, and without which the whole of Christianity is a fact which nothing can explain. By the effusion of the Holy Spirit these men were transformed, so that the people no longer recognised them. Jesus was revealed to them with a grandeur which they had not even caught a glimpse of. No! when they listened to Him in the temple, or on the borders of the lake of Tiberias, Jesus spoke less to their souls; His thoughts, His sentiments, His love, were more strange to them. For the first time they know Him, they understand Him, they comprehend Him. Thus that promise is accomplished: "Lo, I am with you alway!"

I will give another proof of it, more convincing still, because it approaches more closely and presents itself to us as a fact. Do you know a being more present with mankind than Jesus Christ? Eighteen hundred years separate us from Him; and yet, to-day, on all parts of the earth, there are many thousands of men in whose hearts Jesus holds the

innermost and most sacred place. There are thousands of men to whom the fellowship of Jesus is an inexhaustible source of strength, of peace, of joy, so that so far as they will possess Jesus Christ, even in the most complete self-abnegation, they will be happy; and if Jesus Christ failed them, existence otherwise the happiest would be for them without hope. This very morning, listening to the voice of preachers and of missionaries, there are men who have received Jesus Christ, loved Jesus Christ, adored Jesus Christ, and who would tell you that of all the inward dramas which have marked their life, none has been so solemn or so touching as the entry of the King of Peace into their heart and into their life; so that I can affirm that Jesus in the days of His flesh, surrounded by multitudes, was less present in the midst of men than He is to-day; that Jesus Christ, in His absence, separated from us by eighteen centuries, enlightens more minds, converts more hearts, awakens more consciences, and gains more disciples, than when He astonished the earth by His miracles, and the multitudes cried to Him, "Hosannah!" What a wonderful realisation of those words: "Behold, I am with you alway." And be good enough to remark, that we have here a unique and strange characteristic of Christianity. Other religions have never pretended to anything like it. They have instituted rites and ceremonies; they have said, "Observe them, and you will be saved;" they have had prophets who have given themselves out as interpreters of the divine will, they have had their Buddhas or their Mahomets. But it is only Christ who dare lay claim to that moral prodigy of being present in the innermost and most sacred home of souls, and He alone has succeeded in doing so. This characteristic is so strange that it struck the greatest military genius of our age; and, in his exile in St. Helena, Napoleon, comparing his reign with that of Christ, uttered one day the following words: "I impassioned

the multitudes who died for me; but there was needed, in order to this, my presence, the electric influence of my looks, my tones of voice, a word of mine; then I kindled the sacred fire in their hearts. Christ alone succeeded in raising the hearts of men to the invisible, to the conquest of time and space. He alone demands, through eighteen centuries, what is the most difficult thing to obtain, and what a sage demands in vain from friends, a father from his children, a wife from her husband, a brother from his brother—in a word, the heart. That is what He seeks for Himself. He peremptorily insists on it, and He succeeds at once. What a miracle! Through time and space the human soul, with all its faculties, becomes an appendage to the being of Christ. All those who sincerely believe in Him feel that wonderful and supernatural love—a phenomenon inexplicable and impossible to human power; a sacred fire whose strength that great destroyer, Time, cannot consume, and whose duration he cannot limit. That is what I, Napoleon, admire still more, because I have often thought on the subject. And, that is what absolutely proves to me the Divinity of Jesus Christ.”

Thus, my brethren, it must be admitted, Jesus keeps His promise; He is present in the midst of His people. Let us now try to point out the nature of that eternal presence.

In the first place, that presence is *spiritual*. Some people deny this; they tell us that those only can feel the presence of Christ who find it in the consecrated host, in the holy victim descending upon the altar at the word of the priest.

You all know the bewitching charms with which this opinion is surrounded. A cathedral is open for a solemn communion. Crowds gather into and fill it to the very altar; the service commences, and the Liturgy slowly unfolds the successive acts of the religious drama. Incense fills the air, the organ peals beneath the arched roof majestic notes, and the imagination becomes insensibly softened by that grand

spectacle. All at once there is silence, the priest pronounces a creative word, and the host is changed into the adorable God! The choir immediately breaks forth and causes the solemn chants of *Ave verum corpus*, or *Salutaris hostia*, to resound. Christ has come down, and the soul, overwhelmed by these mingled inward emotions and sensible impressions, is perhaps lost in a religious fervour.

A short distance off, in an upper room, there are some believers gathered together. You find nothing there addressed to the senses, or intended to entrance the imagination; so must the worship of the Church, at the time of its birth, have appeared in its first simplicity to the heathen world. There are men there who have fixed their firm hope in Jesus Christ, and, trusting in His promises, they are come to call upon Him. His word resounds in its magnificent simplicity, such as the publicans of Galilee heard it eighteen centuries ago. It searches into the refuges where an unpardoned sinner shelters himself. His conscience is seized. No strange impression comes to lead in the wrong direction the emotion which he experiences. When in this place souls thus touched repent and address to the Saviour a cry of strong confidence, they will hear His pardoning voice, and, celebrating their deliverance, say, "The Lord was with us."

Now, which of these two emotions was the true one? Where was the Saviour, at the altar or in the upper room? My brethren, He was where His sincere and believing people called upon Him; and without doubt, many who ardently call upon Him felt His presence when they communicated at the altar; but will you then deny that the believers in the upper room who were enlightened, sanctified, and comforted by His words, and who had tasted His grace, will you deny that they felt His presence? Now, if they felt it, it was because that presence was spiritual; it was because at the altar, as well as in the upper room, it does not depend on a

material rite, nor on a magic word ; it was because in all places it is felt by hearts that hunger after righteousness and truth.

But if we affirm that the presence of Jesus Christ is spiritual—that it is to the soul and not to the senses that it is manifested—take care not to believe, on the other hand, that we make it a vague and imaginary thing. The Christ whose presence we claim is that of the Gospels and Epistles, the Christ of St. Peter, of St. Paul, and of St. John ; as they contemplated Him, so do we now ; the words which they heard fall from His lips are what reach us in our turn ; at all times the same, there is in them no shadow of change. His disciples of the nineteenth century hear and comprehend them quite as well as those of the first ; St. Paul claimed for all disciples that fundamental equality, when renouncing all the advantages which his being a Jew and a kinsman of Christ, according to the flesh, could have given him over his converts, he cries out : “ Though we have known Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we Him no more thus.” It is, indeed, by His word that Jesus communicates Himself to all ; and it is by that word that we can take hold of Him, see Him, and hear Him, without fear of being deceived.

Is that all ? Is it only by His word that Jesus reveals to us His presence ? No, my brethren, for then He would share that characteristic with every man of genius who leaves behind him the luminous trace of his thoughts. It is certain, indeed, that we may say of a Cæsar, or of a Plato, of a Mahomet, or of a Voltaire, that though dead they still speak ; that though separated from our period by distances of time, they make their action to be felt in a more powerful manner than the great majority of those who are living.

Now, there is infinitely more in the presence of Christ. Behind the written word, there is the living Word ; there is the invisible Saviour who manifests Himself to the heart, so

that when I say He is present, I employ that word in its most simple and literal sense, as a child would use it. It is in this sense that the *real* presence of Jesus Christ may be spoken of; and it is, indeed, that presence which He has promised to His Church. Here the thought which I expressed at the commencement comes back with new power. Have a Christ who is but a creature, and however great you make him, his presence will be, as far as you are concerned, but a figure, but a vain metaphor; for you would not be able, you could not attribute to him the omnipresence which belongs to God only. He will be present in the midst of you by being remembered, by being imitated, and through the word which he has left, that is all; as to calling upon him, as to believing that he draws near and interposes in what befalls you, you could not think of that. Have, on the contrary, the Christ of the Scriptures, God our Saviour, and you will believe in His presence in the truest sense of that word. Then everything, as it were, changes both in the Church and in life! The place where we have called upon Him becomes a temple, although we have neither priest nor altar; the communion is no longer a vain and cold memorial, it is the choice meeting-place which the Saviour offers to our souls; all that the Scriptures reveal to us about the love of Jesus, about the kindness of the good Shepherd who follows after His lost sheep, and who guards His faithful sheep, is no longer, as far as we are concerned, an allegory; it is a reality which is accomplished in our lives. He is present in our existence, present in happiness and in affliction, present in our solitary chamber as in the Church, present in the activity of each hour as in the inactivity of sickness; yes, present, though invisible, till the day when we shall see Him "face to face," and find in that sight satisfying joys to all eternity.

That is what the Gospel teaches us about the presence of

Christ in the midst of His people. That presence, in the words on which we meditate, is specially promised to the Church: "Go, instruct all nations; *and*, lo, I am with you alway, until the end of the world." But I do not think myself unfaithful to my text, when I affirm that the same promise is also addressed to each Christian soul. Let us devote the time which remains to the study of these words in their double application.

Jesus is present in the Church: "Lo, I am with you alway." The Church is the boat which the storm threatens to swallow up incessantly, and which always rises up again, for it bears Jesus Christ.

In the first ages of its life, what a formidable coalition! What dangers, what hatreds, what threatenings. All the powers of earth were leagued against it. Science, the priesthood, royalty, wealth, and, above all, corruption. The Church is about to disappear! No, it is then that she goes on conquering souls the more; it is then that she sends everywhere her missionaries; it is then that she rises up out of each baptism of blood newly attired with youth, strength, and immortality. Jesus is with her. But later on she is bent on becoming an earthly power; she would cover herself with the purple of the Cæsars. Pompous and magnificent, she will put on the triple crown, and seem to deny her crucified King. What do I then see? What becomes of that Church? It is at the moment when she apparently triumphs, that her strength forsakes her. It is then that all the places where St. Paul preached, where the first prayers and the first songs resounded, pass under the yoke of the infidel; it is then that the cross, torn up in Asia and in Africa, seems on the point of disappearing even in Europe. Nothing less than that formidable trial could teach the Church that her strength does not rest on any earthly prop, and that she is quite complete in the invisible presence of her Divine Head.

“Lo, I am with you alway.” He has raised this Church up again every time that, fallen or fainting, she has cried to Him; and He will raise her up always. I see to-day other threatenings, and other storms. I see a haughty and disdainful infidelity, which comes down like a freezing wind from the heights of science; I see it unite with the materialism which comes from below. Behold the advancing tempest, it falls upon the vessel of the Church; it rends her sails; it strikes down her masts. I hear some disciples, of little or no faith, cry out: “Master, Master, we perish!” We perish, my brethren, and why? Is He not there who promised you His presence? Do you believe that He who triumphed over the old world will not be able to triumph over the new world? Do you believe that He who, from the heights of a cross, confounded the wisdom of Greece and the materialism of Rome, will not be able to confound the sophists and jeerers of to-day? Do you believe that infidelity can blot out that grand form? Do you believe that it can rid itself of Jesus? As for me, I am tranquil; I wait for all these explications and all these systems. I know that they will come and dash against the person of Christ, as the waves of the sea dash against the granite rocks. I know that they will be able to shake our reasonings, to trouble our theology, to make, perhaps, all the human props give way, by which we men of little faith think to sustain Him who sustains all things; I am tranquil, for Christ is with us. Yes, the storm is terrible; and at times we are overwhelmed by it. Yes, we are feeble; feeble in knowledge, in faith, and in holiness; yes, in our ranks there are defections which rend us, treacheries which make our heart bleed. O my God! on the side of the earth everything fails us; but Thou art with us, and that is enough. Thou hast conquered by means which confound us; Thou hast conquered under the opprobrium of Nazareth, of Gethsemane, and of Golgotha. Divine Head of the

Church, Thou hast humbled us, wilt Thou not give us the victory?

“Lo, I am with you alway.” But, I think, I hear now an objection from many who are listening to me. They see that Jesus Christ can be present in a church which He leaves humbled and persecuted, for it is humiliations and attacks which He has predicted of it; but what makes them doubt as to His presence, is the sight of the inward state of that Church itself. Here is the Christian family divided; here, in the presence of a world which rejoices at seeing the different communions separated by an abyss which goes on ever widening. Here, in the very churches to which we belong, are lamentable rendings. Or, indeed, what is sadder still, here is religious indifference extending over souls like a gloomy and icy mist; prayer, zeal, and faith are being extinguished, little by little, in the advancing night; no longer is there anything heard, save the monotonous sound of a formal worship. Here and there stand out solitarily, over the depths of general darkness, some devoted lives which cast forth a light that is soon quenched. O, my brethren, how can we then believe in the presence of Christ?

We must, nevertheless, believe in it; and the more so, because nothing seems to proclaim it. We must believe in it, because, in promising His presence to the Church, Jesus knew that it would be made up of men like us; and because He foresaw its faintings, its languors, and its falls.

My brethren, you have, perhaps, a magnificent ideal of the Church. You see that Church liberated from the world, victorious by faith and by love. I rejoice in it, if that hope fills you with a holy ambition, if you are bent on trying to realise that dream of your soul; but I am saddened if, feeding your mind with the picture of that imaginary Church, you believe that the Lord is no longer in the actual Church to which you belong, and the wounds and sufferings of which

you, with so much reason, deplore. Remember what the Church was at first; that it was composed of none but disciples chosen directly by Jesus Christ. But what do I see in the upper room? Disciples who will forsake their Master, a Peter who is going to deny Him, a Judas who is going to betray Him. Is it in vain that the Word of God has placed under our eyes that spectacle? Remember those apostolical churches to which the Epistles were addressed. What troubles, what divisions, what falls, what scandals! Yet the Lord was there. Yes, other epochs have been acquainted with these pangs of anguish which the state of the Church causes you. At the end of the Middle Ages, in that fifteenth century, when such thick darkness set in upon the world, when, from the pontifical throne to the lowest monastery, frightful scandals dishonoured the Gospel, it seemed for a moment that faith was about to be precipitated into the abyss of universal doubt. Then pious persons, shut up within the cells of convents, often wept and groaned. "O Christ!" they cried out, "Where art thou? Has Thy glory disappeared for ever? Return and visit Thy Church." Many books of that period have preserved the trace of those bitter tears. And yet Christ was there, and the hour was approaching when His Gospel, translated by the hand of a monk, was going to illuminate the world. And who dare tell us that we are not approaching one of those solemn epochs, when the creative Spirit will renew the Church? Those secular structures which are falling down, that religious agitation which is seizing so many minds, those new empires which are opening to the Gospel, but especially that felt need of an awakening, and those increasing aspirations of the Christian world, which everywhere trusts anew in prayer, are they not so many proofs of the presence of the invisible Head of the Church, are they not so many voices by which He says to us, "Lo, I am with you alway?"

He is ever with us ; He is here. Where two or three hearts call upon Him He descends. Thus, then, when I ascend a Christian pulpit, I, who would like to go and seat myself in the lowest place among the least ; when, from the midst of my feebleness, I give testimony to the truth ; and when, at the thought of all that is human, and little, and miserable, which blends itself with that solemn mission, I would close my mouth, that marvellous promise relieves me : “The Lord is here.” He is here, and that is what causes our strength and our hope. He is here ; He who calls Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; He is here who is the sovereign Preacher ; the Master of hearts and of consciences is here. He is here, and we can cast upon Him the burden of our souls ; and when our feeble, powerless voice becomes His servant, when our wisdom is His wisdom, our testimony His testimony, our word His word, then what we bind on earth is bound in heaven ; then to those to whom we remit sins they are remitted ; then, my brethren, our authority becomes the grandest and most solemn in the world, because, behind man, behind the preacher who will soon disappear, there is Christ who reigns to all eternity. “Lo, I am with you alway.”

It is thus that this promise is applicable to the Church. But what Jesus announces to the Church, He announces to each individual soul ; it is to each of you that He has promised His presence, and His presence till the end. Alas ! how small is the number of those who realise that most comfortable of all promises ; and if I read your hearts, how many doubts would rise at that one question, “Is the Lord with you ?”

How can He be with us, I shall be asked by several of those who are listening to me, since He leaves us exposed to so many afflictions, since trials come and fall incessantly upon us ? Where is the care of His providence attesting His

presence? Where are those unexpected deliverances, those answered prayers, those signs by which people recognise that He is there? See, we had put in Him our hope, and oftentimes everything has failed us. Misfortune has followed us incessantly; and if anything has, perhaps, distinguished us, it is the blows which have struck us.

When such words are heard, and when we see how many souls are caused to doubt by experience, and how murmuring—that forerunner of infidelity—easily comes and plants itself on our lips, can we still deny that there has been in our hearts a mercenary instinct which seeks its own interests even in love? And when, for I will give you an answer, did you see in the Gospel that in calling you to His service, Jesus Christ has promised you the good things of earth, the favour of men, and everything that our heart desires? Listen to Him rather declaring to you that it is through much affliction that heaven is entered, and that it is thereby He will make you partakers of His holiness. In these strokes which fall upon you, you find the proof that God forgets you; supported by Scripture ~~late~~ there the proof that He loves you, and that He will save you. That is so true, that if you could show me a man whom no affliction has ever struck, a man whose whole existence has been one tissue of continuous prosperity, the future of that man would make me tremble, for it would seem to me that God had abandoned him. Trial is divine education. Happy are those who weep, says the Lord to you. Yes, following the picture of Isaiah, your name is written on the palm of His hand when that hand strikes you, as well as when it blesses you. You would like to establish yourself on earth, to sit in the shade, and peacefully drink at the spring which gushes forth at your feet. Journey on, the divine voice says to you, and the shade disappears under the burning rays of the sun, and the stream dries up. Onward across the desert! March onward, O redeemed one. Stranger

and traveller take again the pilgrim staff, and follow that mysterious voice which calls thee; it is the voice of the Lord. He calls thee where He Himself has gone before thee. He *is* with thee *always*.

Yes, you will answer me, affliction may be a proof of the Lord's presence. We understand that, for oftentimes it sanctifies. But is it so with that mysterious state which I am passing through? Can I believe that the Lord is there when my soul is dried up, and when nothing restores life to it; when my faith cannot take its flight, when the realities of heaven float before my eyes like vague phantoms, and the promises of God no longer awake in me any joy? Ah! the presence of the Saviour, formerly I knew it, then everything was easy to me; then my faith gave me wings, prayer flew burning from my heart; but to-day those very words which you are considering speak no longer to my soul.

No longer! Are you quite sure of that? And what is then the sadness which fills your heart while uttering these words! No longer! O, disciples of Emmaus, you believe that the Saviour has abandoned you for ever, and you do not see Him journeying at your side till the blessed moment when He will reveal to you His presence. No longer! O you who believe that you have lost your God, and who, as it were, grope for Him; do you not hear Him who, by the mouth of Pascal, says to you: "Thou wouldst not thus search for Me, if thou hadst not found Me." But that presence leaves you in darkness! Listen:

In a gloomy winter's day, no tree moves its verdant top in our fields, no flower casts its perfumes to the winds; everything appears dead in nature. Will you tell me, however, that the sun has not risen? No, although he has disappeared behind a curtain of clouds, he makes his powerful action everywhere felt; and without the sun, which you do not see, there would remain for you only an icy shroud, and the

frightful darkness of a night from which there would be no awaking. My brethren, the soul has its winters also, when the Sun of Righteousness no longer sheds on it more than a sad and pale glimmer, when the heavens are veiled, when obedience is performed without joy, when the rough wind pierces us with discouragement, and freezes us to our very bones. I know that oftentimes they are not spoken of in those theories of the Christian life framed after a system, and according to which everything in the case of the believer should be joy, peace, and light. But those will tell you of them who have painted the heart of man such as the Spirit of God has sounded it. Ask David and Isaiah. Certainly, if men have ever been honoured with the presence of God, it was, indeed, these men; and yet, do you know any book-whatever which has expressed more than they have the languor, the misery, the anguish, and even the terror of the soul which feels itself abandoned by God? In your hours of sadness, do you know any language which translates your combats and groanings better than theirs does? Well, it is those men whom the Spirit of God has used as His interpreters. If you suffer like them, what right have you to say that God abandons you?

Here, my brethren, we are going along the side of an abyss. I have tried to reassure your souls; I have called to your remembrance the causes which hinder you from feeling the presence of the Lord. Have I said all, have I said what it was especially necessary to say? No; I have not named the true, the great cause which hides Jesus Christ from us. You who complain that the heavens float vaguely before your troubled gaze, that the image of the Saviour is effaced and disappearing, search whence the clouds come which conceal Him. From whence do they especially rise, if not from the impure fountain of sin? That secret but ardent worship of your own glory, that feverish search after fortune and an

elevated rank, that vortex of business in which your soul goes on to waste itself away, that hatred and bitterness in which your heart shamefully delights, that time-serving and cowardly compliance with the opinion of others, that love of dissipation, of dress, and of worldly intoxication, those tolerated and cherished lusts, those guilty bonds which you are unwilling to break, it is those that blind you, those are what hinder you from seeing the presence of God.

There come, on the contrary, to your remembrance, calm and blessed hours, when, like the Apostles on Tabor, you have gazed upon the Saviour face to face.' How amiable was His divine form, and with what ravishment your gaze rested on it! But those hours did not appear in your life like unexpected lightning; it was prayer which had prepared them; it was faithfulness which had produced them. Then you felt the truth of those words: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Sanctification; that is the narrow way which conducts to the heights where Jesus manifests Himself to the soul. No; it is not, as some people have believed, to imaginations lost in ecstasy that there is promised that vision of God, the sweetness of which saints have sung; it is to sanctified souls. You who complain of having lost the Saviour, you are not unaware that He is there, and that He is waiting for you at that place which you know, where the sacrifice is to be consumed which you have hitherto refused; He waits for you, not in the midst of your comforts and guilty enjoyments, but in the severe solitude of renunciation; He waits for you in the narrow way where you had met with Him, and which you have forsaken; He waits for you at the pillow of the poor man, whom you no longer visit. Be faithful; you will see that He is faithful, and that He keeps His promise: "Lo, I am with you alway!"

Let me have your attention, my brethren, a few moments longer. I cannot leave these magnificent words without

showing you the consolations and duties which flow from them.

“Lo, I am with you,” says the Lord, “always with you, with you till the end.”

Is there on earth anything grander than faithful love? When an attachment having sprung from two hearts with the sap of youth, has passed through all the hopes and all the enchantments of life in its spring time; when, strengthened by joys, and still more by afflictions and by common tears, it has gone on increasing; when neither the changes of taste and of fortune, nor the frictions of every day, nor the deceptions of experience have been able to weaken it, and when, at the age when everything seems extinguished, the affection still casts forth an ardent and joyous light, is there not something in that spectacle which exalts and honours our poor humanity?

But ah, how rare is that spectacle! How many of our affections have died on the journey. One has forsaken us with the intoxication of youth; another has fled before poverty, or some other bitterness of life. The farther we advance on the journey, the more their number diminishes. And those who loved us most, and on whom we thought to rest for ever, where are they? How much emptiness in the past, and in the future how much emptiness there will still be. Oh! if we possessed a love on which our hearts could rest as on a rock; if always, at every hour, we could seize its powerful reality, what strength and consolation there would be in our lives. “Lo, I am with you alway,” is the reply of Jesus Christ. Yes, always, for in Him there is no shadow of variation. As He appeared to us for the first time on our journey, so is He still to-day. We have, perhaps, followed creatures whom we loved to their last resting place, and we have read on their tomb, “There is no permanent affection here below;” but when we left the cemetery and returned to

the city of living men, the invisible Friend has bent towards us and whispered in our ear, "Lo, I am with you alway." Nothing has been able to keep Him away; poverty has not at all banished Him, as it has so many others; sickness, mourning, and anguish, which so speedily tire the friendships of earth, have caused Him to come with more eagerness. And lo, death itself will not even keep Him away, for He has said: "I am with you, even until the end." Yes, when I shall pass through the valley of shadows, the sombre valley of death; when the world will have no more hope and consolation for me, He will be there; always there. Take, then, thy flight, O my soul, and since everything is being effaced and changing, attach thyself for ever to Him from whom nothing will be able to separate thee. And you, my brother, my sister, who journey alone in the unheeding crowd, you who, in the midst of a life of agitation, feel so much the inward emptiness which nothing of earth has been able to fill, clasp in your heart that promise: "Lo, I am with you alway."

Those are the consolations, and this is the duty.

My brethren, if Jesus were here to-day, where would He conduct you? Would it be into that worldly and frivolous society which is, perhaps, waiting for you? Would it be near those whose lives grieve Him? Could you, in His presence, still mingle in their guilty pleasures? Could you find any joy in the midst of men who would feel towards Him nothing but indifference? Could you cowardly beg their approbation? Could you run in the way of temptation, seek to have your vanity and lusts humoured, or read a book which would soil your soul? Could you, in short, persevere a single day longer in a life which God condemns? Let your conscience answer.

If Jesus were here to-day, where would He conduct you? My brethren, where did He go on earth? Where would He

lead you to-day? To humble, unobserved duties. Not to the broad way of pride, but to the narrow way of obedience; not to enjoyment, but to renunciation; not to glory, but to humility; not to the crown of earth, but to the cross. He would conduct you to that poor man, to that sick person who is, perhaps, waiting for you, to that broken heart which has need of you, to all those sufferings which He ordains you to comprehend and to console. Go, my brethren, where He calls you. To-day into humiliation, and to-morrow into glory; but whether into humiliation or into glory, He says: "Lo, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS."





SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE.

By E. BERSIER, *Paris.*

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh : yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.”—2 Cor. v., 16.

I have chosen as the subject of our meditation a saying of St. Paul, which, perhaps, astonishes you, as it astonished myself before I had caught its true meaning. I confess that formerly these words produced within me a feeling of pain ; they seemed, shall I say it ? to be the expression of a wild spiritualism.—What ! here is an apostle who does not want to know Christ after the flesh ! Is not that the same as wanting to forget the Saviour’s humanity ? Is it not to consider as a small matter the tender and deep sympathy which the Son of Man inspires us with ? Must we then forget His incarnation, His helplessness, His sufferings, all in short that allures us, all that takes hold of our heart, all that comforts us ? Should we have only a glorified Christ as the object of our contemplation ? Would it be our duty to seek Him only in the bosom of the Father, in that perfection, in that celestial splendour which dazzles rather than allures us ! That is what I said to myself with sadness, and, not being able to follow the apostle in his lofty flight, I the more readily returned to the friend of Martha and Mary, to Him who

wept over the grave of Lazarus ; to the Man of Sorrows, who in the days of His flesh bore our griefs, and the weaknesses of our poor humanity.

But there is now light ; I have learned that St. Paul did not mean to take away anything from the Saviour's humanity, and that this saying, which seemed to me so crushing, is on the contrary full of instruction and of consolation. That is what you also will perceive, my brethren, to the extent that you enter into its true sense.

To comprehend it, let us call to mind the admirable chapter from which we have taken it. Among all the epistles of Paul, there is none in which we see all the riches of his heart better than in those which he addressed to the Corinthians ; and the chapter in question shows us from whence that love gushes forth which produces the most devoted life, and the most powerful apostleship which the Church has ever contemplated. If Paul loves thus, it is because the love of Christ constrains him ; that is why he, a stranger, has come to these Corinthians, why he has given them his time, his heart, his life. When Paul declares to them therefore that he loves them, and that there does not arise with that love any carnal, selfish motive, it is because in his connections with the world he takes account of nothing' that is earthly and transient ; be people poor or rich, learned or ignorant, Jew or Gentile, it matters little to him ; he sees in those to whom he speaks only souls that are to be saved. He would not boast, as do those false teachers who trouble his ministry, of having known Christ in Judea, of being one of his brethren according to the flesh. No, he knows Christ only according to the spirit, that is to say, as his Saviour and the Saviour of the Corinthians ; that, in his eyes, is the essential thing, that is the true way by which Christ would be known.

Let us draw from this thought a lesson of primary importance.

What kind of person is he among us who has not envied the Jews the privilege of having had Christ in the days of His flesh? His disciples the happiness of having heard Him? Martha and Mary the privilege of having received Him under their roof? It seems to us that had we heard Him our hearts would have been more moved; that His look would have pacified our souls; that the very sound of His voice would have left in us an impression never to be effaced; that once witnesses of His miracles we should no longer have let doubt enter our mind; and that at the view of His cross our hearts, softened and gained, would have belonged altogether to Him.

Alas! my brethren, who can say that all that would have been realized as regards us? Who can say that, after having seen Jesus, we should have believed the more? Listen to our Saviour Himself. A woman cries out in His presence: "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee." He answers her, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." A man, making his way through the crowd, says to Him: "Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without desiring to see Thee." He answers: "My mother and My brethren are those who hear the Word of God and do it." His apostles in the upper room would like to retain Him. Jesus utters these words: "It is expedient for you that I go away." The disciples at Emmaus cry out: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Jesus disappears from before them. Mary Magdalene in the garden would lay hold on Him, Jesus answers her: "Touch Me not! for I am not yet ascended to My Father." What do all these words amount to, and what is their signification, if not that it is by the soul, before everything, by faith that Jesus would be known and possessed. Now, if it is so, do you not see at once arise from this fact this consoling conclusion, that neither time nor distance hinders Jesus from being known and His presence from being felt, and that in the nineteenth century we can hear

Him, possess Him, rejoice in His light just as really as those who saw Him with their bodily eyes, and contemplated His miracles, and heard His voice? And is not all this bright with evidence? Is it not certain that the Church which saw Jesus Christ in the flesh was feeble, timid, undecided, and sluggish, and that Christ had to leave her in order that she might receive the baptism from on high, and set out radiant with youth, with faith, and with triumphant hope? * They said of St. Paul, "His letters are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." May this not express to some extent the facts of the case as to Jesus Christ? Did His discourses at the time when they were uttered by Him ever produce the wonderful effect which they have produced since He returned to the Father? Did Jesus, in the days of His flesh, ever convert the thousandth part of the souls which the sermons of His apostles and ministers have brought captive to the foot of the cross? Is it not certain that in His absence, separated from us by eighteen centuries, He lives in the world more than when He was seen by the eyes of men, touched by their hands, heard by their ears? Is it not certain that He enlightens more minds, that He touches more hearts, that He awakens more consciences in a single day now than during the three years of His ministry?

You desire to see Him; you envy the privilege of His disciples; you say: "Happy the apostle who leaned his head on His bosom, happy the woman of Samaria who could give Him to drink, happy the man of Cyrene who could carry His cross!" I understand you, my brethren, and I have repeated it like you, but are you certain that through gazing upon Him you would have believed? Are you certain that His humiliation, His poverty, His mean condition would not have turned you from Him? Are you certain that from seeing the Sad-

*See this thought developed in the Discourse on *The Presence of Christ*.

ducees, the scribes, and daring spirits of that time rail at His appearance, you would not have been ashamed of being almost alone in confessing Him, and of being obliged to take your place with Galilæans, with toll-gatherers, and with sinners? Are you certain that while listening to the Pharisees uttering blasphemies and invoking against Jesus the traditions of five centuries and the venerated authority of Moses, you would not have been troubled by your scruples? Are you certain that at the sight of Jesus having no place to lay His head, exposed to ignominy and insult, while God did not undertake His defence; that while gazing upon Him as He groans in the dust of Gethsemane and turns to heaven a look full of anguish, and complains of being abandoned by His Father; that while seeing the pallor of death cover His countenance, you would not have doubted? Ah! my brethren, you are not better than the disciples, you have not more zeal than Peter, you have not more courage than John. What would you have done if you had known Christ according to the flesh? Who knows if you would not have fled? Who knows if you would not have denied Him? you who, enlightened by eighteen centuries of Christianity, and having seen His victorious cross triumph over the world and over your own heart, have perhaps denied Him or at least doubted of Him!

Supposing, however, that you had remained faithful to Him, would you have understood the work for which He had come? Would you not have been attached to His earthly person more than to His divine mission—would you have loved Him according to the spirit, as He would have Himself loved? Would you not have had for Him simply that perfectly human affection which He so strongly rebuked in Peter, when that apostle would have turned him aside from the painful way where the cross awaited Him—or which He condemned, in the case of Martha, when it hindered her from choosing the good part of listening to His words? No; believe in

Jesus Christ, who said to His disciples : "It is expedient for you that I go away." It was expedient, in order that His disciples' love might become what it ought to be—in order that, instead of crawling upon the earth, it might take wings and recognize the Son of God in the Son of Man. It was necessary, in order that His carnally-minded disciples might learn to believe in eternal and invisible realities—in order that they might seek the kingdom of their Master, no longer at Jerusalem—no longer in earthly glory and in the visible triumphs of a crowned Messiah, but in that royalty of souls which the cross alone could render possible. It was necessary that they should be deprived of His look, of His notice, of His voice, in order that their faith might grow and become victorious; just as they deprive the child of its mother's sweet milk, in order that it may grow up and become strong.

My brethren, we now understand what St. Paul means when he declares that he no longer knows Christ after the flesh. It is not that he renounces his Humanity, nor His humiliation, nor His cross, for he desires to know nothing but Christ crucified; but it is that even the humanity of Jesus is to be taken hold of by the eyes of the mind; that it is to be contemplated by faith; that without this it is only a touching spectacle, and unproductive of good results.

What a number of needful lessons might be learnt from that thought! How many things we might say to those who even to-day would like to know Christ only according to the flesh! To melt at the recollection of Jesus with an emotion entirely human; to weep over Him as the victim of human fanaticism; to attach themselves to the transitory side of His ministry; to honour His relics and memory; to let their feelings and imagination only be moved in sight of His cross—is not this knowing Him according to the flesh? Ah! when He is known according to the spirit, it is not after this manner

that He is honoured. At the foot of His cross it is not over Him, it is over themselves, that people weep. In His death they contemplate not His bodily sufferings merely, but more especially His wonderful humiliation, His ineffable sacrifice. In the Son of Man they adore the crucified Son of God; and when they know Him after that manner, they prove it by giving Him their hearts, and by consecrating to Him their lives. They do not go back eighteen hundred years in search of Him as one of the martyrs of history; they do not build Christ crucified a magnificent sepulchre, and feel themselves at liberty to deny the living Christ a place in their hearts; they call upon Him, and invoke Him as the Saviour who reigns from age to age; they act in union with His work; they rejoice in His triumphs; they prepare for His coming—then, my brethren, and only then, is Jesus Christ known.

There is a second and more general lesson to be found in my text. St. Paul tells us that it is not only Jesus Christ, but all men that are henceforth to be known, not according to the flesh but according to the spirit. Well, I wish I could engrave that thought of the apostle also on your souls.

But let us anew put ourselves in mind of its true meaning, for we must here prevent a grave and deplorable mistake. A signification has been given to these words which provokes against itself a most righteous protest. We see Christians, under the pretext of an imaginary perfection, break in sunder all the ties of flesh and blood, renounce their families, and scorn natural affections as if they were weaknesses. We have seen, for instance, a son or a daughter, whom duty called upon to support an aged father or mother, leave them, and, having put before them the never-to-be-broken wall of monastic vows, say to them, “I know you no longer!” Spiritual heroism, people exclaimed—brilliant triumphs gained over the flesh!

Is that what the Gospel teaches us? Is that what St. Paul means?

In Jesus Christ's time such things took place. There were then sons and daughters who, with the intention of pleasing God, offered to the Lord what they ought to have consecrated to their father or mother : they called that gift *corban*—and no one could any longer touch it, as St. Mark tells us. What did Jesus Christ think of this? Jesus called that kind of conduct a making void of God's law. And in the same spirit St. Paul tells us that the Christian who neglects his father or his mother is worse than an infidel. Now, my brethren, to neglect them means not merely to deny them bread, but more especially to refuse them the heart. That is what the Gospel teaches. If, then, under pretext of renouncing the flesh, people should violate or neglect natural laws, they have against them not only the voice of nature but the voice of God himself. Let not men, therefore, come in the name of the Gospel and justify these monstrous abuses of a chimerical perfection. St. Paul has condemned them beforehand, and it is a mockery to support them on his authority.*

There will be cited here, without doubt, the numerous passages in which our Lord unsparingly condemns all those who, before following him, consult flesh and blood. I shall be reminded of those inexorable words, "Let the dead bury their dead!" or that other passage, which is still more strange, "If any one come to me, and hate not his father, his mother, his wife, his children, his brothers, his sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." But what is the subject referred to in these last precepts? He speaks of choosing between duty and the delights of the heart—between the law

* I had no intention in this passage of summarily condemning the monastic life under all its forms ; I simply intended to show that there is something chimerical and irreligious in the contempt of natural affections.—E. B.

of God and the sweet affections of the family. Now, to the believer, the choice cannot be doubtful : when God speaks, we must obey. No affection, not even the closest and most sacred, can come between God and our souls. Here, I venture to say, our conscience gives to Jesus Christ a full assent. But far from this be the system which condemns the life of the heart, the joys of existence and the flesh, as evil in themselves, and which proclaims to the Christian a wild and unfeeling spirituality. No ; let us say it out aloud : the life of the heart, the lawful affections, the body itself—all these have nothing of impurity in them : all that is human can be sanctified and consecrated to God.

What must then be understood by these words of the apostle : “I know no one after the flesh ?” My brethren, the sense of them is very simple. In every man there are two natures—the nature which appears and the inward nature. The man of the flesh is the man that appears ; the man in his spiritual nature is the immortal soul. To the eyes of flesh you are rich, poor, a writer, a magistrate, a merchant, a workman, a servant ; to the eyes of the spirit, you are a child of God. Now, St. Paul declares to us that henceforth what he would see, what he would know in every man, is the spiritual and immortal nature. Do you not observe what freshness, grandeur, and sublimity there is in that saying of the apostle, and does it not fill you with emotion ?

To see in every man an immortal soul, that is what Christianity alone could teach us. Before Jesus Christ, what was a poor man, what was a slave, what was a publican ? Now, to the eyes of Jesus, the soul of the lowest harlot weighs as much when put in the scales as the soul of Cæsar : to the eyes of Jesus, the grandeurs of the flesh are nothing, he does not vouchsafe even a word for them ; but when Mary poured her box of perfume upon His feet, in token of repentance, He declares that this action will be known to the end of time. To

the eyes of Jesus Christ, what are the artificial distinctions of this world? Everywhere He only sees sinners to be saved; to all He offers the same language, to all He grants the same love; no one appears unworthy of His attention, and it is upon the least on earth that He often lavishes the most magnificent instructions.

Now, it is in the school of Jesus Christ that St. Paul learnt to know men no longer according to appearance; it is there that he learnt to see in the Festuses and Agrippas only lost souls, whom he will cause to hear the truth which saves without being preoccupied with their sceptre or their crown; it is there that he learnt to preach the Gospel to an Aquila and a Lydia, with the very same love as had it been the soul of the Pro-consul Sergius or the Governor Publius. It is there that he learnt that there is no longer Greek or Barbarian, or slave or freeman, but that all are equal in the sight of God.

My brethren, it is thus that we must know men; it is thus that we must love them. The world has its distinctions of rank, of learning, of fortune. I, certainly, would not overturn them: they are necessary. Should you overturn them to-day they would reappear to-morrow, because they belong to the very conditions on which society rests. Let us respect them, and not attempt, under the pretext of Christianity, to impose on rank or fortune a level which every one would reserve to himself the right of lowering as far as himself, but you may be sure not lower. But, I pray you, let us know men by what they have that is great and immortal—let us know them according to the spirit and not according to the flesh. For my part, I know nothing more wretched than the manner after which a certain class of people judge men. Men, according to their idea, are no more than tickets representing such a title, such a rank, such a property. Among them there is exchanged a language of convention, which at no times addresses more than the exterior and surface. Outside of the social life,

beyond the relations of superior or inferior, of master or servant, of merchant or purchaser, they surmise nothing; everything is artificial, the font as well as the forum, religion as well as morals—everything is empty, hollow, and without truth. To discover a soul under that varnish would never enter the mind of such a man, who had grown old in the world; his words will never go as far as the soul of those whom he meets; they will never cause a quivering there of those sincere emotions which gush up from the depths of their being. That is the life of thousands of our fellows. Ah! how I like to get out of that fictitious and vitiated atmosphere, in order to breathe the vivifying air of the Gospel; what I find here before everything else in my fellows, is a man—it is more, it is a soul, the sister of my own. Give me a being the most ignorant and vulgar—one of those beings to whom the world would not grant a moment's affection and sympathy; if, on beholding him, I think of Jesus Christ, I am reminded that he is my brother, by what he has which is deepest and most durable—by his soul: and how can I avoid respecting him?

Oh! how grand life would be could we see mankind as Jesus Christ saw them, and could we know men not by appearance, but by that which is within. What discoveries should we not often make among natures which seem the most ungrateful and the hardest. That is what Jesus was able to do. He called the immortal soul, He discovered it in the depths of the most vulgar and defiled life, and the soul answered Him because the voice of Jesus had the mysterious attraction of love. What would an ordinary observer have seen, or even a profound philosopher, in that corner of Galilee where Jesus exercised His ministry? He would have discovered an honest and ignorant population there, but nothing more. He would have judged only according to the flesh. But Jesus brought out of them some of the grandest and most beautiful types which the world has ever known,—a St. Peter, a Mary

and a St. John. Why? Because He saw these souls, because He loved them; let us follow His example, my brethren, let us say with the apostle, that we will know our brethren by their souls, that is to say, by what they have that is eternal.

You are a mother, for instance: how do you know your children? Alas! perhaps you have seen in them up till the present only idols by which your heart is caught. Know them according to the spirit, see in them souls which God intrusts to you, you will thereby only love them more, and you will not incur the terrible responsibility of perhaps destroying them as regards their higher and eternal life.

Introduce the same thought into all your affections, and as far as possible into all your relationships with men. You are Christians. Oh! love no one without loving his soul; give your heart to nothing which cannot be eternal; above the world of appearances, see the world of realities, the only one which God knows. Habituate your views to discover in every man what God Himself discovers in him, then you will have neither a sluggish complaisance towards those who are above you, nor a still more sluggish disdain towards those who are below you; then, following the command of St. Peter, you will honour all men, because in every one of them you will see a soul, that is to say a sanctuary of the living God, a sanctuary perhaps ruined or raised up, but a sanctuary in short which you cannot approach without respect.

My brethren, everything is wearing out, everything is passing away from us; everything that is only flesh must pass away and vanish. Everything cries to us not to give our hearts any longer to what is only appearance. Appearance! Great God, is there in that anything which can save us? Ah! what will all the grandeurs of the flesh do for you on the last day. Of what service, I ask, will all the praises, the approbation, the incense of men be to you? God will know you only by

your spirit. To many of those who were honoured according to the flesh, He will, without doubt say, "Depart from Me, I know you not!" To many of those who were despised according to the flesh, He will say, "Enter into My joy!" Now, since everything ends at that last judgment, it is by the holy and awful light of that day that the Christian ought to value everything.



THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH.

By DR. PRESSENSÉ, *Paris*.

“Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.”—St. Luke viii., 18.

THE Church teaches and is taught in turn; every Christian contributes to this mutual teaching, and has a share in it. Appointed guardian of the truth, he must take care of the sacred deposit, defend his Church against the invasion of error, and preserve the pure Gospel in a faithful heart. He teaches as often as he gives his evidence; he teaches by every pious word he utters, and by every exertion he makes to win a soul for Jesus Christ. But precisely because he teaches, he needs teaching; his religious knowledge is always narrow and insufficient, and should he have acquired all human knowledge, it is as nothing compared to what he would still have to learn. Then this holy knowledge is of such a nature, that it must be increased every day in order not to diminish. It is forgotten with a frightful rapidity; it is altered not less quickly. Many causes, which it is not necessary to enumerate, tend to deprive us of it, if we do not continually reconquer it by persevering labour. Hence the importance to the Church herself of this teaching under its divers forms, the mightiest of which, because the most popular, is preaching. We need not state what it must be; we know that it is only efficacious, in so far as it is the living echo of the Holy Scripture. We wish to-day to speak

particularly to those who listen, not to those who speak. To say the truth, we all listen by turns; and those who are entrusted with the formidable task of teaching ought more than others to feel the necessity to be taught, and to receive abundantly in order to give forth abundantly. The Church not only addresses herself to her proper members, but also to that crowd of hearers who do not yet belong to her, but whom divers motives bring to her worship. Her teaching is designed for them as well as for Christians, and though it takes various shapes, according to the different classes of men to whom it is offered, it remains essentially the same, and the same dispositions are necessary to be benefitted by it. We must show the same activity to learn anew the truth, as to learn it the first time. We shall, therefore, make no distinction between the hearers of the Gospel; what we say to some will be applicable to others, and it will be easy for every one to lay hold of it with the particular application which suits him. We shall repeat to all that serious word of Jesus Christ: "TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR!"

When He spoke thus, He was in the first period of His ministry. Multitudes were thronging around Him, filled with admiration for His person, following Him from place to place, and forming for Him a triumphal retinue. Do not imagine that they were only spurred by low and interested motives. If a certain number of Jews, with a carnal spirit, clave momentarily to Jesus, because they hoped to receive from Him material goods, and, above all things, bodily food; and if some others were moved by an eager curiosity, to be witnesses of some astonishing miracle, yet many were won to the Saviour by His gentleness and tender charity. They liked His word as much as His miracles; it exercised on them a secret but powerful charm, which softened and subjugated them, and they exclaimed, after having heard some of His similitudes, in which He represented the greatest truths

under simple and lively images, "*He does not teach as the Scribes and Pharisees.*" A magnificent harvest seemed ripening in those furrows scarcely sown; but the keen eye of the Sower discerned a real barrenness under a bright appearance. He knew how many germs would be choked under the stones or by the weeds, how many would be carried away by the wind of the world; and He knew how few the ears which would reach full maturity. To what are we to attribute such a poor result? What was wanting? It was not diligent culture, for the Saviour had taken that upon Himself; nor was the sun or the dew wanting; *the favourable soil was wanting.* It is not with the human soul as with the ploughed earth; she is not fertilised passively and against her will. Receiving is for her to be active and willing; conviction is a hard labour. Therefore, so long as she has only stopped at an easy emotion, at fluctuating impressions, she has not truly opened herself to the seed of eternal life; it is strewn on the wayside to rise only for a day. Therefore the divine Master thus solemnly warns the multitudes thronging around Him, "TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR." To hear, is not only to be seated at the feet of Christ, and to feel the charm of His teaching, it is an act of our will. It is not sufficient to acknowledge that He does not teach as the Scribes and Pharisees. Be not deceived; His teaching, which has more sweetness and more charms, requires much more exertion of His hearers than any other. Nothing is easier than to bend our idle spirit under the yoke of the synagogue, and to receive passively a prescribed doctrine. It costs more to enter into the school of freedom than into that of authority; and the gracious Master who requires personal belief, is, indeed, much more exacting than those hard and haughty masters who only require blind submission. "TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR."

How much does not modern Christendom require to hear the same warning! Many centuries have passed since the

professing Christian nations received the teaching of the Gospel, and yet they live in a shameful ignorance. If we interrogated the majority of those who bear Christ's name, we should be confounded to see how little they are acquainted with His doctrine. They know less of Him than the pagans of yesterday. We are still in the presence of a great multitude sitting in darkness. And if we turn towards you, my dear hearers, you who have been nourished with the milk of the Word from your earliest infancy, you who have so often surrounded the pulpit of truth; and if we ask you for the result of so many lectures on the divine Word, and of so many sermons, will not the greater part of you be obliged to acknowledge that there is no proportion between the results and your privileges? It appears as if the sword of the Spirit had become blunt. To what a degree of excellence should we not all have reached had we answered to all the appeals which have been addressed to us; to what a measure of faith, charity, and holiness should we have not attained? Let us impute to ourselves alone this barrenness. We have heard much, but we have not hearkened, not heard with attention. We have imagined that the teaching of the Church possessed a particular power which excused us from making any energetical attempts, and that the holy accents had a magical influence even on an inactive soul, like the sacramental elements, according to the Roman catholic dogma! What a strange subversion of every sound idea!

Preaching can only have a strictly moral effect; it communicates to us thoughts and feelings, and therefore appeals to the thought and to the feeling. It provokes decisions, and therefore stimulates the will. It is accordingly the most moral means of grace, that which necessitates most the effective participation of our freedom. "TAKE HEED, THEREFORE, HOW YE HEAR." To give more weight to that exhortation, let us consider who is He who speaks to us; what He tells us;

the kind of attention which the truth revealed by Him requires ; and, lastly, what it costs to despise it.

Who speaks to you in the teaching which you seek at the foot of the pulpit of truth ? Do you not know that it is God Himself ? He speaks to you first by the Holy Book, which is the basis of all faithful preaching. You hear His prophets and His apostles, those great witnesses, those incomparable preachers, who were authorised to say : “ The Spirit of the Lord is upon us.” You have heard the sublime songs of the harp of Sion. The psalmist has celebrated for you the greatness and the compassion of his God, who is yours, and has stirred you up to adoration and filial confidence. Isaiah has carried you up, as it were, to the foot of Jehovah’s throne, and in his prophetic flight has conducted you, also, in some measure, to the cross where the Man of Sorrows accomplished the great sacrifice. Simple and sublime narrations, bringing to sight, with an astonishing profoundness, on the one side, the secret recesses of the human soul, degraded by the fall ; and, on the other, the admirable ways by which God reclaims her, and brings her back to Himself ; appeals to repentance, sometimes filled with an alarming seriousness, and sometimes pervaded by an infinite tenderness : here the thunder roaring on an overcast sky, there the aurora of the day of salvation gilding the heights lately crowned with lightnings. All those revelations of the Old Testament, stamped by the great hope of the Messiah, from the first page to the last, have been read over and over to you ; all those rays which shone successively for the Jews, have been brought back for you to the same focus. God has not left you on the threshold of the temple, in the majestic porch of the ancient covenant. He has given you the Gospel, with all its details of definitive revelations. For you John the Baptist brings from the wilderness his austere preaching of repentance, and the way beaten by him in the desert has led before your eyes to the manger

and the cross. For you the evangelists have painted the celestial, and yet so really human, figure of the Redeemer; to you the apostles have proclaimed Him, as they proclaimed Him to the multitudes converted by them. You have heard those first addresses of St. Peter which gathered to the Church thousands of adherers. St. Paul has enabled you to lay hold of the most sublime sides of Christian doctrine; he has developed for you, with that keen logic and ardent feeling which characterise him, the fundamental points of the Gospel. St. John has given you a glimpse of those greatest depths of divine love, which unclothe themselves to the eye like the unbounded azure of the sky, in that simple, hearty, mystical language of which he alone possesses the secret. And, lastly, you have heard Him Himself, the divine Master, whose every word is creative, who rouses our hidden energies, who humbles us without casting us down, who throws us into the dust, but without driving us to despair; whose word causes moisture and strength to flow in us, restoring the lame, healing the blind, raising the dead. You have heard Him as if you had been His contemporaries, as if you had been sitting at the foot of the mountain with the crowd who received the charter of His kingdom, or on the edge of Jacob's well with the Samaritan woman, or in the temple in the presence of the unmasked and thunder-struck Pharisees, or in the upper room in which He opens to His disciples His whole heart. Hearers of the prophets and the apostles, hearers of Jesus Christ, can you deny that God has spoken to you?

We are not worthy to unloose the shoe-latchet of the last of the primitive witnesses; and yet, my brethren, we believe that God also speaks to you by our preaching, in the measure in which it is approved by Him. The treasury of grace is deposited in the earthen vessel; what does it signify that the container is weak and frail, if the contents are of infinite value? Revelation must become real and present, passing

through the impressions, the aspirations, the experiences, the secret sorrows of the human heart at every period. Like the Christians of the day of Pentecost, we “speak in our own tongue the wonderful works of God,” in the tongue of our individuality and of our age. Certainly, our word must not be blindly received—it must be brought to the test of the infallible Word of God: for the pure gold of truth which we bring you by preaching is too often alloyed through human frailty. Yet, notwithstanding this, which we deplore, we believe that God condescends to speak through our unworthy mouths and to take us for His instruments also. Why, my brethren, do you so seldom perceive this? It is, in the first place, the fault of your preachers, who, too often being infatuated with themselves, interposing their personalities between you and the truth, care more for the fame of their name than for the triumph of Jesus Christ. But have we no just reproach to make to you? Are you not constantly spreading under their feet that fatal net of vainglory? Are you not much more preoccupied with the human side than with the divine side in the ministry? In acting thus, you do not wrong yourselves less than the witness of truth: in the presence of man you keep the attitude of a judge who bestows blame or approbation; in the presence of God you ought to humble yourselves and to submit. Man leaves you erect; God would cast you into the dust at His feet. It is easier for the natural heart to admire than to obey, to bestow crowns on eloquence than to receive a cross to carry from the hands of Jesus Christ. The Church thus tends to become a kind of academy, where more is spoken of talent and reputation than of conversion and holiness. She obtains what she wants—academical discourses which try to flatter a refined taste, which aim at the intellect and not at the heart, and which reach neither the one nor the other: for he who *seeks* eloquence finds it not, just as he who seeks his life loses it; and you who have encouraged them,

you leave the temple with a soul more empty than when you entered it. Therefore leave man alone, and only seek God. What need is there to hear man speaking as man? What good will he do you? Of what use will it be to you to add weakness to weakness, misery to misery? You must hear God. Gather eagerly the few crumbs of heavenly bread which preaching affords you, and forget everything else. If you sit down at the foot of our pulpits in such a disposition, you will soon recognize that God wants to speak to you by us.

But there is in our midst an all-powerful preacher. No one sees Him with bodily eyes—no one hears Him with bodily ears—and yet He speaks; and when He does not speak, all is ineffectual, all is dead in our worship. You guess whom I mean—it is the Holy Spirit. If His flame has not purified our lips, they only pronounce barren words which the wind carries away; if He does not open your heart as that of Lydia, you remain cold and indifferent: there is no longer any communication between God and you. Without Him, the book which He has inspired is only a dumb book: He alone gives it life. But when He breathes upon those sacred pages, it is like a resurrection of the great biblical past. The divine words, pronounced centuries ago, sound again with the same power. We have no longer only the memorial of the evangelical history, it unrolls itself under our eyes; it resembles a river, the ice of which had fettered the waters, but under the sun's warm breath it begins again to flow. How the soul vibrates under that working of the Spirit! God speaks as really to her as if He shook heaven and earth. She does not always answer, but she well knows that He has spoken.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear. He who demands an audience of you is not a man, were he the greatest or the most illustrious. He is the King of Heaven—He who has created you and will judge you. When He condescends to address you, one cannot say to Him as one would say to one's

equal, "When I have a convenient season I will call for thee." One cannot turn away with indifference when He asks our heart. He is not mocked with impunity,

"God reveals His presence,
Let us now adore Him,
And with awe appear before Him;
He speaks in His temple,
All in us keep silence,
And before Him bow with reverence:
Him alone—God we own;
He is our Lord and Saviour:
Praise His name for ever."

It is God who speaks to you; but what does He tell you? That which is of the utmost consequence to you—that which is necessary for time and for eternity. It is here not the question of a truth which offers an attraction to the spirit, which adds a new notion to those which we are already possessing. No; the point in question is the central truth which sways all others, that from which they borrow their value, as the planets borrow their light from the luminous globe around which they gravitate. God does not speak to amuse our intellect, or to send to our hearts a sweet and figurative emotion. He wants to restore us to the truth in every respect. He reveals us to ourselves by rooting out every illusion of our mind. He shows us our soul quite naked; He lightens her deep darkness; He denounces to us without reserve our corruption and our perdition; He causes us to discover in the inward recesses of our being, in our perverted will, the principle of evil: and thus is solved the most formidable question which has ever tormented mankind. But He has also to tell us how He raises us up again—by what means He causes us to reascend to Him from the abyss of our degradation. He shows us, in the narrow path which proceeds from the cross, the way of returning to God and to be restored to our own. He reveals to us,

with a perfect clearness, His design to restore all things in Jesus Christ, and to reconcile them by the blood of His cross. He teaches us how, by His Spirit, we may possess again the Divine image, now disfigured in us by sin, and become sharers of His holiness. What He has to tell us may therefore be reduced to that declaration, "Thou art lost, but I have forgiven thee; come to Me, and I will save thee." Is there a subject of preoccupation equal to that? What are the things which we call important compared with that only needful thing? What value have the problems which we start, in the face of that problem of life and death, or, rather, of eternity? The religious truth is, definitively, the hidden pole on which everything depends here below, unless we see in the world and in history a mere plaything of chance, and not the realization of a divine thought. To possess it, is to be placed in the centre of everything; is to have the possibility of understanding, of laying hold of everything; it is to see harmony follow chaos; but it is, above all things, to get out ourselves from disorder and find peace again, and, instead of advancing with a bandage on the eyes and despair in the heart, towards an unknown world, the desolate region of perdition, it is fixing our eyes on the cross, and walking with a firm step towards the realization of the most certain hopes. How should we, in the presence of such a truth, not borrow from St. Paul the familiar energy of his language, and repeat with him: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord—for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." How serious, important, and indispensable, therefore, is the Word which God directs to us. In the midst of all those diverse ways which cross one another in this great crossway of human opinions, a voice is heard—the voice of God—to tell us, "This is the way of salvation." We have only a few days to hear it. Oh! "TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR."

The same recommendation follows from the nature of the teaching which the Church offers to us—it demands serious attention. Shut up, as we are commonly, in the circle of visible things, it is difficult for us to lift our minds to the contemplation of invisible things. Our thoughts have been too much accustomed to creep; their heavy wings do no longer carry them, by a sudden flight, towards the celestial heights. Our preoccupations are for the world; this is the real disposition of our spirit—it has a great inclination for it. If we do not energetically react against that natural tendency, we shall be hurried by the stream of vanity far from truth. We all wear the chain of vulgar interests, of trifling cares. If we do not break it, we shall remain the sad prisoners of the world, at the very hour when the voice from heaven rings in our ears. The most stirring appeals will be covered by the tumult of our worldly thoughts—more culpable than those in the parable, who refused to answer the invitation of a generous king, under pretence of their affairs or their pleasures. In reality—that is to say, in the spirit—one has remained in his fields, where he calculates the value of the next harvest; another is in his counting-house, reckoning his money; a third calls to his mind the success of his literary labours; and that elegant lady figures to herself the festivity where she hopes to shine; and he who is going to marry her only thinks of her. How many wandering minds in the great assemblies united in our temples! If we should hear vibrating in distinct words all the confused thoughts of those who attend, what a buzzing of vanity, what an uproar of eager desires! It will be thus, my brethren, as long as you do not struggle against yourselves. Attention is the prize of continued exertion—it supposes a firm resolution to remove every frivolous distraction. We must be watchful every moment to drive away those flocks of birds always ready to pick up the seed of eternal life as it falls on the soil. We must curb those erring thoughts which drag

us along through the world—shake off the torpor into which an idle fancy plunges us, and concentrate our whole being in calm attention.

Yet attention is not sufficient, Christian truth claims a particular attention. It is not enough to bring great sagacity, a penetrating spirit, trained to study and fully determined to learn the truths which are presented. If it were only the question of a purely human knowledge, we should not require more. Such a person will easily succeed in earthly sciences, he will speedily make himself familiar with the most complicated languages, he will be a great mathematician, an eminent scholar; he will, as one has cleverly said, make the tour of the planet, and return laden with a treasure of learning which will secure to him the most envied glory. But the region beyond that, the country of the soul, the sublime sphere of religious truth will not open to him on that account; no, not even when borne on the wings of genius. This man whose thought is so cultivated and so deep in a limited circle, is lost in darkness as soon as he oversteps it; he is a blind man, the unhappiest of all the blind, because he fancies he can see everything, and boldly advances towards the unknown. Religious truth has organs of its own, and by which it reveals itself to man. It addresses itself above all things to his heart and his conscience. There, in our moral being, is the inward eye, able to perceive the heavenly light; there is the sense of the divine. Neither the understanding, nor the imagination, nor the reason, abandoned to itself, will ever receive a ray of it, because it may happen that we deny God and the invisible world, while we possess these faculties in a superior degree. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear. If your heart is not well prepared, if your conscience is not upright, you will certainly have heard sounds ringing in your ears; but those sounds, which bring to others an unspeakable joy, will for you be lost in the air where they vibrated. Lo! there is close to

you a man with an uncultivated appearance, perhaps one of the despised of the earth. See how his eyes sparkle, what a holy emotion animates all his features on hearing those same words which leave you cold and indifferent! He eagerly gathers each word, as the thirsty man drinks the water of the well found at last in the burning sand. He weeps, he worships, he would like to prostrate himself before God, for he will go down to his house justified. That man is not like you; he has eyes to see, and ears to hear; he has not shut up his heart, he has not stifled his conscience. When, escaping one day from the pride which possesses you, and obeying that secret impulse which drives you towards God, ceasing to stifle your best aspirations, you will come into this temple with a broken heart and an attentive conscience, you too will see and you will hear. It will seem to you as if you awoke from a bad dream, which had veiled and darkened everything. A wonderful world of beauty will appear to you where you have only seen vain illusions; you will recognise your God in the Galilæan, and you will know that from a despised country the salvation of mankind has come.

The truth in which you have been instructed in the Christian Church is a holy law and, at the same time, an august dogma. It aims at life, at reality, at practice; in this province conviction is called conversion; to believe is not simply to adhere in the spirit to a system, it is to change the way, it is to choose a new path, it is to give ourselves to Jesus Christ. The part of the will is therefore considerable in the formation of our belief. We are incessantly provoked, by the preaching of the Gospel, to make a vigorous use of it. If we are not yet the true disciples of Christ, we are urged to side with Him, to get out of our hesitation and to be decided; the teaching of the Church places before our eyes life and death, it solicits from us a determination which allows no delay. If we have already accepted in principle the ground of Christian life, new

consequences of the law of holiness will be each day proposed to us ; numberless duties will be presented, and we shall have thus a new path to take whenever we hear the divine Word. Take heed, therefore, how ye hear ! If you hear the teaching of the Church only as one hears a dissertation, or a discourse full of gentleness which touches the heart, but which leaves only a few emotions behind, the morning hoar-frost will not pass away more quickly than those superficial impressions. He who is satisfied to hear the divine Word without practising it, is, according to St. James, a forgetful hearer. He only remembers it who tries to accomplish the divine will, and who, from the always vague and moveable impression, passes to positive acts. Besides, nothing is more sad, nothing, I should say, is more demoralising, than to understand our duties and not perform them. The light which illuminates without warming rises from that pale and frozen sun of the abode of condemnation, the inhabitants of which believe what they curse ; the devils know what is good, while they reject it. To know the best and to do the worst is the perversion of perversions. Let us take heed lest we approach it imperceptibly, by accustoming ourselves to the view of the Christian ideal image, while we resign ourselves to the flat reality of a miserable life. Let us to each progress in knowledge add progress in holiness—an effort, at least, a firmer determination better to serve God. Let us seek in each exhortation that which concerns us personally, let us stop in its flight the arrow which is designed for us, let us introduce into our life the reforms which we feel to be necessary. Let us not take Christianity as Pharisees or as artists ; let us take it seriously, as the rule of our life, a rule not only for the great days, but for the most ordinary course of existence. Let us always bear in mind that we are standing on the boundaries of eternity, and that only to-day belongs to us. How is it that we so much despise invisible and eternal things ? What are the interests which are debated

in the forum or in parliament, compared with the interests of the immortal soul? It is truly inconceivable that discourses on the future life leave us so tranquil, as if our fate did not depend on their issue.

These reflections, my brethren, lead us to a last consideration, which will give to our text a frightful solemnity. **TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR**, thinking of what it costs to despise the truth. The Word of God does not return to Him without effect, it comes back to Him after having saved or ruined us. It is not possible for it to resemble ours, which so often is lost in void space; it does not fall to the ground, or, if it falls, it is either like the dew which fertilises the soil or the lightning which consumes it. After having heard it, we are no longer in the position in which we were before it was proclaimed to us. If we have received it with submission, it has opened to us that door of heaven which no one can shut, it has freed us from condemnation. But if we have rejected it, it has fastened upon us the burden of a new and more terrible condemnation, for it increases our responsibility. Before you had heard it one could believe that there was more ignorance than conscious rebellion in your estrangement from God; one could think that if you knew Him you would be eager to love and to serve Him. Such an excuse is no longer possible from the day you have been instructed in the truth. You know now what you reject; it is with a full knowledge that you reject a God who has clearly manifested Himself to you. You add to your old sins a new sin, which crowns them all, which stamps them with a fixed decision, and which renders them, on that account, incurable. It is with full consciousness that you turn aside from a God who has drawn near to you. Therefore, after this momentary contact with the truth, you are more perverted and more hardened; your culpability has increased in proportion to the facilities which had been afforded to you, and on your impenitent soul falls, with all its

weight, that severe word: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" It would have been better that the name of Jesus Christ had never been pronounced in our ears, rather than, having learned it from our childhood, never to have given Him our hearts. It would have been better to have been born on some far-off shore, where redeeming truth has not yet penetrated, rather than, having grown up in the shade of the sanctuary, to have been lulled into formalism. It would have been better to have inhabited a Sodom rather than a Capernaum or a Jerusalem, and have received with indifference the message of salvation. A frightful condition that which compels us to consider the offered grace as our greatest misfortune in consequence of its abuse, and which causes us to lose ourselves irreparably with what was designed to save us.

When the divine child of Mary was presented to Simeon, the old saint declared that He "would be set for the fall and rising again of many," and the apostle St. Paul developed the same thought by saying that the Gospel "is either the savour of life unto life, or the savour of death unto death." The religious history of mankind is a long commentary on these words. The most dreadful thing is the national fall of the chosen people, and these eighteen centuries Jesus Christ has been a savour of death unto death to the unconverted Jews. In the midst of our modern Christendom, wherever evangelical light has shone on inert or frivolous souls, it has left behind it a moral decline which was almost irremediable. Certainly the unhappiest man to-day, the most hardened, is he who has been blessed most, enlightened most, and who has not truly given himself to God. It is some Demas, who has heard the pure Gospel, who has preached it perhaps, but who has not been truly converted himself. Woe to that man! it would have been good for him if he had never been born! On the other hand, what an admirable

raising up of formerly degraded souls, what a transformation, what a resurrection! Jesus Christ has been to them a savour of life. There is a person, who, a few days ago, was an ignorant man, with a coarse spirit, who could not understand his Master, nor follow Him in the day of danger, and who denied Him three times in the court of the high priest. To-day it is the apostle St. Peter, confounding the Sanhedrim by his courage, resisting threats and ill-treatment; and as much by his humility, as by his immovable firmness. Yesterday he was the thunderer's son, full of violence in his indignation; to-day he is the apostle of charity; yesterday we saw Saul, the persecutor, to-day we see St. Paul. And if you trace these falls and these risings again back to their first cause, you will find, on the one side the rejected word, and on the other the received and accepted word; therefore, **TAKE HEED HOW YE HEAR.**

TAKE HEED, my brethren, we have discharged our duty; we have proclaimed before you the truth; what can we do more? We cannot substitute ourselves for you: the exercise of your will is the most personal act which can be accomplished. It depends on your determination to make of the hour you have passed in this temple the subject of an incurable regret, or of an eternal thanksgiving. Take your resolution; make haste, the time is short; truth wears rapidly out for him who refuses to open his spirit to it. Do not lose the few days which God is still granting to you; and remember that the only bread which nourishes is that which we eat in the sweat of our brow.

TAKE HEED, THEREFORE, HOW YE HEAR. Amen.





THE UNVEILED MYSTERY OF GOD.

BY DR. LUTHARDT.

“And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head towards the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance. And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.”—EXODUS xxxiv., 4—10.

GRACE be with you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is in man a yearning after the unseen. Everyone feels, even if he will not confess it, that another world lies, after all, behind this one. Not to be repulsed, it draws men to it, that they may recognize it, and enter into

close relationship with it; for we are bound up together with it. But the world of spirits is twofold—the kingdom of the powers of darkness below, and the kingdom of light in heaven.

In man there is by nature a secret drawing to that which is below. There is the dark point of sin in us which draws us downward. Whoever follows this drawing goes to destruction. Thus was Saul lost when he fell from God, and sought his help in the gloomy infernal powers. So were those children of destruction of whom St. John says that they boasted of “knowing the depths of Satan” (Rev. ii., 24). So is it, indeed, at all times: whoever forsakes God, and refuses to believe in Him, comes easily to believe in all kinds of gloomy powers, and to get into connexion with them. But it is not only curiosity which seeks to know the mystery of darkness which God in His grace has nevertheless veiled from us with this world of light. There is also a practical knowledge in sensual desires. These give actual experience of darkness, and produce children of darkness and of destruction. As the fly is drawn to the flame with irresistible force, approaching it nearer and nearer, it writhes with pain—but desire is stronger than pain—till it lies dead below: so does suicidal lust draw men into pain and the depths of ruin.

But there is in man, thank God, another drawing—a drawing to *light*, a drawing to *God*. For we were made for Him. It is true we have fallen from and forsaken Him. But although we have separated ourselves from Him, He has not altogether given up His connection with us. With secret ties, He holds us bound to Himself; by hidden voices within, He speaks to us, assures us of His nearness, calls us back to Himself, and awakes in us the longing desire after the light and life that is in God.

The drawing of life after God is also a drawing of knowledge. Man left the way of life in the beginning, in order to

tread the way of knowledge, which became hurtful to him. Now, God goes therefore to meet him on the way of knowledge, that He may lead him to life. Nothing is more worthy to be known than God. "He is the greatest, the loveliest, the best; He is the sweetest and surest of all, the noblest of all treasures"—even of all treasures of knowledge. Man bears God's image and likeness: he has therefore the call to know God. Nothing is more worthy of man than this knowledge; and no knowledge is greater. Of everything on earth, man is the most wonderful: to know him is the richest, highest, and most estimable knowledge. But what is man compared with God? "Sea without bottom or shore—wonder of all wonders—I sink down into thee."

But God is a mystery: who is going to unveil this mystery? He dwells in a light which no one can reach: who is going to approach this light? Different courses have been taken in order to come to Him. The way of silent surrender to inner contemplation, in which man lets all separate thoughts become lost in one overpowering experience of the infinity of God. But we thus attain only to the feeling of an unspeakable one, into whose depth we seem to sink, as into an immense and boundless sea. Or the way of the understanding is entered upon which seeks to comprehend Him by distinguishing and separating from one another the different parts and attributes in Him. But God is not a sum of attributes.

Can it be called knowing a man to add up a total of attributes? They may all be correct, and yet the knowledge is incorrect. These attributes are not the man himself; they are not his nature. What is the living tie which holds all the particular ones together? What is the innermost core of his being? It depends on that. The innermost nature of a man is his heart. As this is constituted, so is the man. This decides respecting him. And the true knowledge is to know with the heart. Not with this or that separate power of my

spirit, but with the innermost nature of my very self. Loving devotedness is that which knows not the cold criticism of the understanding. Love is not blind, as the saying is, but seeing—thoroughly seeing. It may be blind as regards particulars, which strike the eyes of others, and in which they think to find the man himself: for these things love may, perhaps, have no eye; but for the peculiar, innermost being of a man, it has the keenest eye, the finest feeling, and the surest judgment.

So is it also with the knowledge of God. The *heart*, the loving devotion of our inner man, knows Him. The way of love is the way of knowledge. And God's heart is the object of knowledge—not His majesty, not His eternal power and Godhead. Who can speak intelligibly of these? Frames of our peculiar thoughts, not expressions of actual inner experience. His heart is Himself, and that completely, as He is with respect to us. There all the fulness of His being is comprised as in a unity, in order to open itself up and communicate itself to us in love. For His heart is love: it is the innermost being, the unveiled mystery of God. He who would paint God, must paint love—a fire of love, which fills heaven and earth. But who can comprehend and describe this boundless and endless love? It has collected itself, and given itself a bodily form, in order to reveal itself to us. The heart of God has opened itself up to us—eternal love has revealed itself to us in *Christ Jesus*. In Him the mystery of ages is manifest. He is the unveiled mystery of God. "Philip, he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." (John xiv., 9.) And in blessed recollection of this sight, John triumphantly exclaims: GOD IS LOVE. That is the greatest and the highest, the loveliest and richest, the most blessed and comforting thing that man can say of God—He is love.

But it is not in the New Testament that this is revealed for the first time. It is as old as the revelation of God's eternal counsel of love. Even in the Old Testament Christ is con-

tained, although in type and prophecy. But in the knowledge of Christ is the knowledge of love also contained. Moses it is true is the servant of the law ; but on the heights of the mountain of law, he hears a proclamation of Jehovah, who reveals Himself to him by word of mouth. And the revelation runs thus, “**MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONG SUFFERING, AND ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH.**” Of all the revelations of God in the Old Testament, this which was given to Moses is the greatest and most wonderful, and its theme runs thus, “**GOD IS LOVE.**” There is darkness round about God, He is veiled in mystery, no mortal man beholds His countenance and lives ; the eyes of Moses are holden by Jehovah, whilst He passes by him. But a word falls upon his ear : in this word God pronounces His nature, and this word runs thus—“**GOD IS LOVE.**” That is the unveiled mystery of God. Our text to-day treats of it.

While Moses was on the mount with Jehovah, the people had made a golden calf, and given it idolatrous worship. The wrath of the Holy One burnt upon them, and God in anger was going to destroy them. Then Moses placed himself as a wall before his people. He reminds God of the nations of the heathen world, to whom the honour of His name is pledged in Israel, he reminds Him of the holy forefathers of the people, and the promised future of salvation, and his intercession overcame the wrath of Jehovah. But as he descended from the mountain and saw the idolatry of the people, he broke the tables of the law at the foot of the mountain before their eyes, he burned the image into dust and sprinkled it on the water and they drank of it, and he removed the tabernacle of witness outside the camp of apostate Israel ; three thousand however expiated the sin of apostasy by their death. Thus were the people punished. They had showed themselves unworthy to be the people of salvation. It is true, to fulfil his promise to them, God will bring them into the promised

land ; He will not however go with them Himself, but will let His angel go with them. He will not be the God of this people in particular, but He will only lead their history, as He leads the history of other peoples, whom He lets go their own way. Then Moses went in a second time to intercede for them with God, that He would not let them go their own way like other peoples, but that His countenance might lead them ; that He would be present with them Himself, not merely with His mighty will, but with His gracious will. And God promised him that He would let His countenance shine upon them. So Moses obtained, in answer to prayer, that his people should remain, and that they should remain the people of God. He has now, however, a third petition—a petition in favour of himself. Let it please God to show him what He is as God. May He be pleased to reveal to him His glory. This also was granted to him. It is true he cannot himself see the countenance of God ; the glory of His majesty is not for man who lives in the body of death. But He will nevertheless declare to him His nature in the words which He will utter in his hearing when His glory passes by him. And then God Himself speaks the words and preaches the name of the Lord, and says : “ Lord, Lord God, Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”

It is an occurrence without equal in the history of the Old Testament. Moses stands before God in all the greatness of his calling, to be the mediator, intercessor, and redeemer of his people. God appears to him in all the majesty of His unapproachable holiness and in all the condescension of His gracious kindness. This revelation is the highest point in the whole history of the Israelites up to the present time, and is decisive as to their future. But the word in which this revelation is contained and which God Himself utters before Moses, runs thus : “ GOD IS LOVE.” That is the unveiled mystery of God.

Let us then consider this UNVEILED MYSTERY in the threefold way in which our text sets it before our eyes.

(1) In the direction of life. (2) In the forgiveness of sins.
(3) In covenant fellowship.

I. *In the direction of life.*—God orders the vast and disposes of the most isolated object. That is just His greatness—attention in what is little. But how often are our ways and God's direction of our life a mystery to us? That He leads us happily and blessedly, we believe, although what we see often appears to us to be strange. Yet we shall one day stand upon the heights of light and look back upon our dark paths in the valley, and they will be light, and our understanding will give its judgment in the praise of love. That is the unveiled mystery of God in the direction of life.

Moses stands here on such a height. For Sinai, with its revelation of God, is the aim of the divine direction of Moses' life. Here Moses prays the Lord: "Let me behold Thy glory;" and God answers him, "Merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." That is the unveiled mystery of God in the direction of the life of *Moses*.

Wonderful was the course of his life—the direction of no other man's life more wonderful. Very early had he a feeling and a presentiment of his calling within his breast. When he slew that Egyptian, "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts vii., 25). But the way he took withdrew him from his brethren, drove him into banishment, and into the school of renunciation and of patient want. In those forty long years which he spent far from Egypt and from his friends, in the land of the Midianites, he learnt to renounce his own thoughts and ways. Only after he had offered up his own will, and buried the conjectured future of his calling, did the dream of his youth fulfil itself to the man of God, now eighty years of age.

But how much better fitted for it he now was than formerly. What he formerly longed for, and pressed forward to, he now sinks back from dispirited. No longer did he do of his own will what he did, but against the inclination of his will. He became the saviour of his people; but it was of God's grace and out of obedience to God's word. For the accomplishment of this, he could now see that where his own arm had sought to give help, the mighty arm of Jehovah had glorified itself, redeeming Israel with signs and wonders, bearing them as on eagles' wings, burying their foes in the depth of the sea, and, surrounding Israel with loving care, had led them safely to the state, where God made His covenant with them for ever. And Moses became the redeemer, the leader, the mediator of his people—the people of promise! If he now looks back upon the ways of his life from this point, and asks what is that God who glorifies Himself therein, God's answer runs thus: *Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*

My dear brethren, it is the sin of men, in the course of their life, to have a wish to form their future themselves, and to tear to themselves as a prey what, after all, must be received as a free gift from the hand of God. That was the temptation of the first Adam. "Ye shall be as gods." This was certainly man's future—a future for which we also still wait. For we know, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that we shall be like Him." (1 John iii., 2.) It is his sin, however, wilfully to want to tear to himself as a prey what God alone has reserved to Himself the right of giving to them that love Him. "All this will I give thee" was the word of temptation addressed to the second Adam. It perfectly describes His future. For all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. (Rev. xi., 15.) But He is to receive the rule of the world from God's hand, and in the way of obedience unto death, and of

the renunciation of everything that He has on earth to the very raiment of His body, yea, to His very life. Then only did God exalt Him, and give Him a name which is above every name, and at which every knee should bow. (Phil. ii., 7-10.)

That is the law of God's kingdom—the grain of corn must die before it can produce fruit. Man can accomplish much by his will ; but the best thing that he desires he obtains only when he has learnt to long for it no longer, but offers his own will and wish to the will of God. Without a will, without questioning, without complaint, proceeds the Christian's course to its goal. The motto of the world runs thus : "Self is the man." The Christian's prayer is—"Not my will, but Thine be done." The question of the natural man is—Why ? The Christian lays his hand upon his lips and silently adores the divine leading, even where he must believe without seeing ; but complaint grows dumb over praise, even in tribulation. Without a will, without questioning, without complaint—is the Christian's course, his course to the goal. We certainly have had some wishes and some longings ; it would have been our heart's joy and bliss to have attained them. It was not to be so. We had to deny ourselves that. With tears we have bidden them farewell. Then, however, first commenced in our hearts the heavy labour of freeing ourselves from the wish. We have made a sacrifice of it ; buried it. Then God granted it to us, when we did not think of it, and in a way which we did not expect. Not as if it were only necessary to renounce something in order to obtain it. The one who would deny himself with this idea, would, indeed, not be denying himself. Completely, and without reserve, must our will be offered up. But God has reserved to His right of sovereignty, whether, and what, and how He will grant to us. But so often does God at the present time place us already upon a summit of light, that we can gaze upon a part of the way He has led us, and understand and praise the

wisdom of His direction of our life. If our impatience, which ever supposes the end already come where it sees no way through, could wait for it, we should still more understand our life, even in particulars.

But on a height shall we one day be placed,—on the last, bright height of the heavenly Zion. From that day forward shall we look back and survey and recognise the ways of the manifold wisdom of God in the history of our life, and of the nations, the Church, and humanity; and how our ways were entwined into the history of the whole, and the whole was again ordered for our service; and with adoration we shall fall down, wonder, and cry out, “Lord, Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”

That is the unveiled mystery of God in the *conduct of life*.

II. We will consider this unveiled mystery *in the forgiveness of sin*. For our life is full of sins and guilt. The termination of our life is the seal of the forgiveness of sins.

Moses stands before God with the new tables of stone, on which God’s finger is to write anew the law of the Ten Commandments. The first lie, broken in pieces, at the foot of the mount—broken in pieces through chagrin at the sin of apostasy. The new tables which Moses brings before God bring to remembrance the great sin of the people. The accusing sin stands there before God. It is then significant that God, before He records anew the requirements of His will, first proclaims of Himself: “Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” What are we to learn therefrom?

We bear the law of God written on our hearts. But our sin has broken it. We are sorry; we should like to be pious and holy. Hence we come and present ourselves before God with new resolutions: from henceforth it shall be otherwise

with us, should it please God to write His law afresh on our hearts, we will commence a new structure of our moral life. But how long does it continue till it is as before? It will not come to a really new life. We amend there and then; but our moral life remains at all times a wearying work, and never becomes a free, joyful matter, which is understood of itself—which gushes and streams fresh and gladly out of the heart. Whence is this? The failing is in the foundation. We are occupied with works, and therefore we remain under the law, and come not to the liberty of the children of God. We will make our actions right before the character is first changed. But the fruits produce not the tree, but the tree the fruits. Our whole conduct is good for nothing at the bottom, if it does not proceed from free, joyful desire and love. Love makes us free from the law. But how do we arrive at the free love of the heart? It is no thing of planning. Man cannot propose to love. Love is ever inflamed and produced by a powerful impression made upon us. God must make such an impression upon us as to win our hearts, and to make it impossible for us to do other than love Him. By what means does God make such an impression upon us? Not by His infinite greatness and majesty, but by His gracious love. “We love Him, because He has first loved us.” (1 John iv., 19.) His love overcomes our hearts. And what love is that? It is God’s pardoning love: not the love manifested in the displays of His goodness, in His anxiety for our earthly life. This humbles us; perhaps, it shames us and makes us tender, but it does not yet touch our innermost being. The innermost point in us, where we are connected with God, is the conscience. And just here we feel ourselves separated from God. Here we must experience the love of God: that is His *forgiving* love.

But this is the right foundation of all moral work. And no other foundation can bear the weight of the building. It does not avail for us just to resolve on forgetting what is

behind, and pressing on to that which is before. Our conscience does not forget it, and God does not forget it either. As long as our conscience is not pure and free, we have no joyfulness in God. And as long as our debt is not paid in God's sight, He has no pleasure in us. Where there is unpardoned sin, all labour for morality is vain. Indeed, it is also the case in human life: it is a common human feeling. The structure of a life may appear ever so stout and happy, but if an unatoned-for and unpardoned offence lies at the bottom, there is no joy and no blessing, for there is a want of the right foundation. In the morning, the whole building may have fallen in pieces. So is it also in this case. On forgiveness alone is a new life built up. Before God writes His laws upon our hearts that we may do them, He first reveals to us His forgiving grace. We must let this new foundation of grace be laid, else there is no peace in us, no joy in our work. "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart." (Ps. cxix., 32.)

Formerly, our own power we deemed efficacious, and the grace of God was only received as a help. But grace will not be merely the handmaid of our strength. It will be our very and only strength. It is only when we have become utterly weak in the sight of God, and the strength of our thigh has been lamed (Gen. xxxii., 25-26), so that we can do no more than hang on His neck and entreat Him to bless us; it is only when we feel as if all our bones were broken in pieces, and we lie helplessly before God, having surrendered ourselves to Him at discretion, that He may do with us what He will — comfort us or thrust us into the wilderness, take us into His service or throw us away as useless—for it is all right, we have deserved nothing, are of no worth, and feel helpless to do anything of ourselves: it is only therefore when we lie before Him with our gaze

only clinging to Him, with our eye hanging on His eye, our whole being and life having become, as it were, only one look which implores forgiveness, which hangs on grace—that is the bond which binds us to Him, that is the only thing which we still have power to do—there and then shall we hear within, as He graciously speaks to us: “Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” And with this peace we shall also feel how life and power stream into us, and a new love fills and moves our heart, so that it wells up with joy to God, and breaks out in the words: “Merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth!” That is the unveiled mystery of God.

And with forgiveness the blessing also comes. Where there is guilt there is no blessing. But to the paralytic the Lord first said: “Thy sins be forgiven,” and then He healed him. And the blessing of the Lord goes from race to race, and His grace to a thousand generations.

It is true God is a holy God, “Who visits the sins of the fathers upon the children, and children’s children, to the third and fourth generation.” But love triumphs over wrath, for love is eternal, like God, whilst wrath belongs only to time, like sin; love consumes wrath, so that wrath cannot remain before it. Christ bore and passed through the wrath of God; but it was love which placed Him on the way of wrath, and which, in the streaming blood of Jesus on the cross, opened the fountain of forgiveness. The triumph of love over wrath is the unveiled mystery of God in the *forgiveness of sins*.

III. We will consider this unveiled mystery *in covenant fellowship*.

The revelations of God’s grace give Moses courage to make another request, that God would not only let the past be gone, but begin anew; and God grants him this also—He will make a covenant with this people, and with wonders will

He glorify it. The covenant of God with Israel rests on the forgiveness of sins.

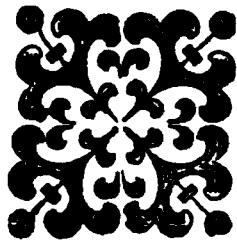
God dwells in the midst of them, He is their God and they are His people, and He leads them on their way, and He brings them to the goal. He thus reveals Himself to them as a covenant God. But all this is only a prophecy of the covenant of God with us in Christ Jesus. This rests on the true, real forgiveness of sins. For the offerings of the Levitical priesthood availed not to cleanse the conscience. The blood of Jesus Christ and His holy obedience makes us clean from all sin. In Jesus Christ God has become our covenant God. He has taken us out of the world, He has made His dwelling among us, He leads us to the goal of our pilgrimage.

But all this is but the commencement of the completion. We wait for the fulfilment of the promise. True, Jesus has gone into the holiest of all, and we have cast the anchor of our hopes into the depths of heaven, whither our Forerunner is gone before for us. (Heb. vi., 19-20). In hope, the abode yonder is already here. But we are not yet yonder. We are still on our pilgrimage to the hall of blessedness. There for the first time will there be the right celebration of the covenant. There shall we sing with all the blessed the redemption song of Moses, the servant of God (Rev. xv., 3.), when we stand on Zion.

Over the heights proceeds the history of salvation. From Sinai and Jerusalem, over Calvary and Olivet to the heavenly Zion. I raise mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help. Sinai and Jerusalem are the prophecy, Calvary and Olivet the fulfilment; but the heavenly Zion brings the end. I have from afar gazed upon Thy throne, O Lord, and gladly would I have poured forth my soul.

From mountain to mountain proceeds the history of redemption, from step to step the mystery of God unfolds

Himself—His name is Jesus Christ. He is the unveiled mystery of God, He is the revealed counsel of ages, He is the disclosed heart of His Father, He is the bodily appearing love. Typified in testimony, manifested in the flesh, He will come again in glory, and then put within our mouths the words of Jehovah,—“ LORD, LORD GOD, MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, LONG-SUFFERING, AND ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS AND TRUTH ! ” Amen.





OUR DUTY IN ILLNESS.

By DR. GAUSSEN, *Geneva.*

"Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."—John xi., 3-5.



YOU have just heard that prayer, so simple and so touching, of the two sisters of Lazarus: "*Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick!*" It ought already to prepare you to understand that most frequently there is much love in that dispensation by which our Creator and our Master judges it proper to lay us on a bed of illness. Indeed, although all of us are in a very few days to depart from this life and appear at the tribunal of God, and although that future is for us the most important and most certain of all truths, we are too frequently so unhappily distracted by it, that there is much more mercy than rigour in the trials by which God would draw our thoughts to it.

If He had appointed that we should all leave the earth on one and the same day, and if He had determined beforehand a season of our life when we should all fall, at the same hour, by a common death, as all the leaves of the forest fall in one and the same autumn, the mere thought of that general departure should alone be a powerful lever to raise us above the

dust, and to bring back our thoughts to the things on high ; but God has done much more : He has appointed for us an order of departure much more fitted to keep us in a salutary vigilance. He has willed that we should pass from life without regular order—some after others, at all ages, in all seasons of the year, at all hours of the day, frequently in a manner most unexpected—young persons often before the old, the son often before his father, the little child before its grandfather ; to remind us more vividly every day that we constantly pass down the river of life, where, from one moment to another, a sudden cataract may launch us for ever into the ocean of an eternal future, and in order that there may not be on earth a child of Adam which might not say to himself : “Thou fool, this very night thy soul shall perhaps be required of thee !”

But alas ! you all know even these great lessons remain too frequently unimproved, and you see your neighbours set out for the invisible world as if that country which they have entered was ever to be a strange country to you ; you groan, it is true, over the void which they leave you—you weep over the earth which they have left—but you do not occupy yourself with that day when you shall go the same way ; you do not know how to apply yourself, with all the strength of your soul, to assure yourself of a good reception into the house on high ; you defer to unite yourself seriously to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life eternal.

Have you not often remarked the sad insensibility of the great number and their deplorable prejudices, even at the time when God speaks to them in a voice so powerful ? Observe carefully, in one of our villages, a crowd assembled on one and the same morning to go and commit to the earth the last remains of a young man universally loved : they issue from his abode, they cross over fields, they carry him to the tomb. You believe that that great lesson will remain a long time fresh in the hearts of all, and a long time powerful. Alas !

you are deceived. The living forget death even when standing close to the tomb. There are several of them who say to themselves on the way : "Oh my God, am I myself ready for the day when Thou wilt say to me also, 'Son of man, return!' and do I bear in my soul the peace of Jesus Christ?" Alas! death is, perhaps, spoken of on the way to the tomb. Death is thought of, but not in a way befitting death. And if any good and serious reflection has been presented to their minds, they go away and dissipate it in that customary entertainment, so often in shocking disagreement with the scenes of the day, and soon they are quite occupied in that funeral party with the things of earth and of the present day only, with short recollections or long projects for the time which will follow, without desiring to think that not even the morrow is theirs, and that, perhaps, they are to spend it in the other world. It is thus then, too often in vain, that for the purpose of attaching to the heart, by tender ties, the thoughts of the future, God takes away from you your neighbours, and places them on the other side of the veil which still conceals from your eyes the scenes close by you of an awful eternity. Alas! that last hour, which is advancing towards us as on a journey, and which really is so near, so near your person—that solemn hour is still very far from the thoughts of many of you, and your life is employed in forgetting it—that life which was given you for no other purpose than to prepare for it.

What does God then in His goodness do? He sounds a bell to awaken you. Here is a disease, here is God telling you : "My son, I want thy heart, and I am going, perhaps, to call thee; art thou ready? Hast thou received that new birth without which no one can enter My kingdom? This life of probation will return no more for thee, I give it but once; thy eternity will presently decide itself for ever!" It is thus, my brethren, that God sends you disease, in order that by making you fear the loss of a fleeting life, it may cause you

to fear the loss of one that is eternal. Such is His aim ; you have there, as it were, the first shocks of an earthquake, which come to warn, in the middle of the night, the inhabitant of a dwelling ready to fall in, to awake, to arise, to set out, to hasten to the place of refuge, the city of habitations, the abode which cannot be moved, “whose builder and founder is God.”

May then all the illnesses with which God will in future visit your families and your persons be thus blessed to each of you !

I am going to speak to you about the duties of those who are ill, of the duties of their relatives, of the duties of all. In other words, I am going to speak to you first of your duties in the illnesses of those about you, and to ask you if you show yourselves Christian friends to them, and if, like Martha and Mary, you can *call Jesus to them* ; I am going to speak to you, in the second place, of your duties in your own illnesses, and to ask you if you sincerely desire that they may, like that of Lazarus, be *for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby* ; I am going to speak to you of your duties in the expectation of illnesses, and to ask you if you are prepared for them, and if it would then be said of you to the Saviour, as it was with Lazarus : “ *Lord he whom Thou lovest is sick.* ”

Yes, my God ! Thou usest all things in order to draw us to Thyself, sometimes health and sometimes sickness, sometimes domestic enjoyments and sometimes sorrows, privations, isolation, tears. But, my God, we know all these appeals must be sanctified in us by Thy mighty word and by Thy divine Spirit ! Without this aid all these means leave us insensible, and Thy most striking lessons glide upon hearts of marble, or bend us only like the yoke for a day. Come then, Saviour, come and speak to us Thyself, come and cause us to understand all Thy words, come and let us see to-

day in their reality eternal things, in order that we may set our hearts there, and unite ourselves to Thee in order to have life !

I. I shall address myself, first, to you whom the Saviour calls to the same trial as those happy sisters, of whom the Gospel has said : “ *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus* ” (Lazarus, their brother, was ill,)—to you, who for a long time see languishing on a bed of sickness, or struggling against suffering, a brother, a spouse, a father, a servant, a child, a pious Dorcas, a faithful Lazarus, so justly dear.

I will not ask you if you have for their sad condition the regards of tenderness, nor if you practise towards them those delicate attentions and that sweet patience which their misfortunes demand. Ah ! it is not when you see them suffering or threatened that it is necessary to commit them to your tenderness ; it is then rather that they become ten times dearer to you, that all your affection is awakened and softened, like as a young mother seems to be attached to her feeble child in proportion to its dependence and the care which it demands. Ah ! it is then, on the contrary, that you would like to be able to efface from your recollection all the uneasiness which you caused them ; it is then that you would cut off from your past all those hours when you were to them an occasion of sadness. Oh my friend, oh my father, should I like, if I were condemned to the grief of losing you, to have to reproach myself with having saddened your heart during that trial by the least wrong, by the least negligence ? Should I not like, on the contrary, to take upon myself all your sufferings, and to become a comfort to your last days ?

But, my brethren, would that be all ? Should the kindness of Christian friends confine itself to caring for this mortal covering ? Is it only for these days of perishable life that you

are united? Do you cease to love those who are round about you after death has thrown upon them a funeral pall? Is there then no longer any connection afterwards between them and you? Is everything brought to an end then, or rather is it not true that then, on the contrary, everything is commenced? Do they not enter from that solemn and mysterious moment upon their true existence, upon their eternity of happiness or of misery—eternity, before which thirty lives like that which you pass together here below, would be still less than is, in comparison with the whole of man's career, the duration of the twinkling of an eye or a flash of lightning! Would you then be bound to them only as those friends on the theatre, who cease to belong to one another from the moment the curtain has fallen? Would you not be loved, cared for, cherished as immortal souls? Ah! you know well that it would be better for you, for your sick friend, "to enter into life having one eye, or one arm, or one foot, than be cast into hell where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched." The one whom you love, the one whom you care for with so much solicitude on that bed of illness, that creature so dear, has a soul, an immortal soul, a soul for the salvation of which it would be worth his while to suffer a thousand illnesses and to pass a thousand times through all the agonies of death. Do you think enough of that? I follow you to the head of that bed of sorrow, I find you there by day, and I find you there at midnight, driving away from your eyelids a sleep which would relieve the weight of your cares; I see around you everything which the art of healing and the solitudes of your tenderness have been able to offer for the assuagement of so many evils; I admire the ingenious and indefatigable movements of your zeal; I sympathize with your pangs of anguish; but you know that in that covering so dear, under those mortal features which express to you so much gratitude, and which still smile upon you with so much sweetness, there is an immortal inhabitant, there is a

being who is never to come to an end, there is a soul which must be loved, cared for, supported, and presented to the heavenly Physician ; a soul, alas, always more or less diseased, a soul of itself lost and damned without a Saviour. "He who has the Son has life, he who has not the Son has not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (1 John v., 2, John iii., 36.) You are acting in vain ; the body which you are concerned about is sooner or later to descend into the dust of the tomb ; but if the soul which animates it knows Jesus Christ, it will never die ; and that very body, vile though it be, will be raised from the dust by Him and made like unto His own glorified body (Phil. iii., 21). If then it is given you to bring the precious soul of that sick one to the faith of the children of God, and of being, by your conversation, by your prayers, the means of its conversion, that sick one will receive from you more than a thousand lives ; he will owe to your instrumentality the pardon of his God, holiness, repose, glory, eternity ; then you will "save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James v., 20.) Then you will be able to say of that one what Jesus said to Martha, when speaking to her of Lazarus : "Martha, thy brother shall rise again ! I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believeth in Me shall live, even though he should be dead ; he that believeth in Me shall never die ! Believest thou these things ?" What ought you then to do in future to your friend ? Imitate the two sisters of Lazarus, that is all our advice. Do to him what Martha and Mary did at Bethany to their brother Lazarus. See them in our text :—

In a house of the little town there was a happy family, cherished by Jesus, and composed of a brother and his two sisters. All at once their domestic joys are troubled ; Lazarus is seized with a violent and fatal illness ; there he is, lying on a bed of suffering ; his sisters are uneasy ; symptoms grow worse, and become alarming ; soon they give up hope, or

at least they have no longer any hope, except in Him who raises the dead. Martha and Mary know where to find Him—He was then on the other side of Jordan; they hasten to send for *Him*, even there; and this is the whole of their prayer: “*Lord,*” they tell Him, “*Lord! he whom Thou lovest is sick.*” Simple, humble, and touching prayer! “*He whom Thou lovest is sick.*”

They have sought for Jesus—first, on behalf of Lazarus; and secondly, for themselves; first, to bless and sanctify Lazarus in his illness; and secondly, to bless and sanctify the sisters in their trial; first, to heal Lazarus, if that miracle could enter within the views of His love, or to guide and introduce him, like a tender shepherd, to the fold above; secondly, to comfort the sisters of Lazarus by His word and by His spirit, if He judge it proper thus to take away from them all the joys of this life.

Well, go yourselves, also, and seek for Jesus. He is nearer your dwelling than Jordan was to Bethany. “I am with you,” He has told us, “until the end of the world; and where two or three are met together in My name I am in the midst of them.” Yes; go then in search of Him by the prayer of faith, both for your sick ones and for yourselves; for the sick one ask Him, if you wish, life and healing; but ask Him especially for the healing of his soul, and the life of his soul; for yourselves, He calls you to contend for the faith; He would put to the proof your patience, your disengagement from the world, your confidence in His promises. Go then in search of Jesus, and ask Him for yourselves these two things—first, the surrender of the heart to the will of God; secondly, fidelity.

I say first, the surrender of the heart to God, in a holy and filial trust. O my Saviour and my God, I would speak to Thee only as the sisters of Lazarus. *Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.* I dare prescribe nothing to Thy wisdom, for if

I prayed without restriction for his healing, I should ask, perhaps, what would be injurious to him. No, Lord; remove, if it is possible, this cup from me, that I may not drink it; nevertheless Thy will, not mine, be done. O Jesus! Jesus! *He whom Thou lovest is sick.*

I say, in the second place, fidelity. Yes, ask God to enable you to be to the sick a Christian friend, a friend of his soul; such a friend as you will desire to have been on the great day of Christ; ask that, in the midst of your cares and of your disquietudes, the thought of the necessity of belonging to Jesus Christ, in order to have life, may ever be present to you. Ask that your first wishes, your most ardent prayers for your friend, may bear on his interests before God, and on the life of eternity; ask that there may be given to you an amiable, tender, Christian sweetness, a holy presence of mind which can lose no occasion of being to him the instrument of spiritual consolations in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And in order to do that, you have three important duties to fulfil, for which you require a spirit of prudence and of zeal. These three duties are—first, not to let the sick be ignorant of the gravity of his state; secondly, to pray with him; and thirdly, to tell and present to him the promises and the exhortations of God's word.

O, my friends, do not say that you cannot do this; do not say that you will summon a minister for that work, and that you would not dare to discharge it yourselves. If you speak in that way, it will be the sad proof that you have not faith, that you do not yet know the salvation of Jesus Christ, nor what prayer is. God does not ask for fine prayers, but real prayers, and true prayers are always beautiful. He asks the simple expression of your desires and of your faith. The simpler prayer is, the more it is according to the heart of God; the simpler prayer is, the better it ascends to heaven, and the more it penetrates those who hear it with the thought

that prayer is a reality; that the presence of the Saviour in a room of prayer is a reality, and that all His promises are a reality. Ah! there is only needed in order to that a little faith; and I know, thank God, many persons without culture, and many children still very young, who can pray thus. If there is any misplaced timidity, any false shame keeping you back, commence, if you wish, with some written prayers, especially some verses of the Psalms; but the shortest prayers which your heart and your faith shall have dictated to you, will avail a great deal better still.

Another duty more difficult, and yet more important, perhaps, to fulfil is, as I have said, not to let him for whom you are concerned be ignorant of the gravity of his illness. God is warning him in His goodness; God is giving him time—a time more precious than gold, than health, than life itself; God would not wish him to be surprised. Will you destroy the work of God, and place yourself in collision with His goodness? Would you like to have him taken by surprise? Would you dare to stifle that voice of warning which the mercy of the Most High would have him hear? Would you let him giddily enter upon an unchanging eternity, when a God of love cries to him, “My son, I am calling thee: hast thou given Me thy heart? hast thou come to the blood of redemption? art thou prepared to meet thy God?” God is there; eternity is at the door, the Lord comes; and should He be hidden from him? Alas, there is often a father, a mother, a spouse, a son, who acts that unbelieving and baleful part! Oh, how cruel this will appear in the light of the last day; and how bitterly and eternally it will be reproached! Say not that you are afraid of injuring the health of the sick, in being more faithful. I am far from condemning a certain caution; but I will give two replies—I will answer, first, that if the sick one is in such a state that the thought of going before Jesus, the only Saviour of his soul

the tender Friend, the Comforter, the Resurrection, and the Life—if that thought causes so much trouble and fear, alas! it is the most manifest proof that he has not the Gospel in his heart; that he has not received that new birth which is necessary in order to enter the kingdom of God; that he belongs not to Jesus Christ, and that he has, in consequence, more need than any other of being warned while there is still time, in order that he may flee from the wrath to come, embrace eternal life, and find a Saviour.

In the second place, I will say that, for my part, I have never seen that the visit of the pastor, nor the exhortations of the Gospel addressed to the sick, have aggravated his condition. I have seen just the contrary; I have very often seen Christian hope sustain even the body of the dying; I have seen the peace of the soul extend, in some sort, even to the suffering and mortal covering which was about to go down to the tomb. Shall I cite a recent example? A few days ago, in our city, a foreign lady, a worthy sister of Mrs. Fry, the apostle of prisons, asked to see a poor servant belonging to her country, who had reached the last stage of a consumption. This was refused, through fear, it was said, of causing the sick servant to be injuriously excited; but that Christian woman, animated with the most tender compassion, fixed her eyes with as much gravity as sweetness on the person who made the refusal, and said to her, “Madam, what do you think of eternity?” The door was opened for her; and soon the happy invalid, who for a long time had been agitated, uneasy, without rest, and without peace, because she was afraid to look to the future, and because she did not know Jesus Christ, was filled with the joy of His salvation, edified all her master’s family by her happiness, and died a few days after, praising and blessing God. “The happiest day of my life,” she often repeated, “was

that on which that messenger of peace presented herself at my bedside, and spoke in my hearing the words of my Saviour !”

II.—And now it remains for me to speak to you of what we have to do before God, when we find ourselves visited by some disease ; and as this is not the place to remind the sick of their duties, it is to those who have been ill I am going to speak, by calling them to answer the rapid questions I am about to address them.

There are, doubtless, but few in this assembly whom the Lord has not already visited with some illness. O, my dear hearers, it was a cry of warning ; it was what Jesus has called “ the time of your visitation ;” the days of which He has said, “ If thou hadst known at least in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace !” Say to yourself then, indeed, that on the great day of Christ these dispensations will be reckoned among the number of His most tender compassions, and of His most inestimable benefits. They were calls of His grace which cried to you : Commune with thyself ! dost thou belong to Me ? Thou art but a miserable transgressor ; thou hast been too long but an ingrate, thou hast neglected Me ; thou hast had only lukewarmness for My word, for My pardon, for My heaven ; but now, while there is still time, come to Me to have life, and give Me thy heart !

Well may each of you ask himself to-day, *before God*, if he has been able to profit from these appeals, and if he has not abused these visitations of illness. You have abused them, if you have been wanting in compunction when they commenced, if you have been wanting in patience and reflection while they continued, if you have been wanting in faithfulness when they passed away.

Have you then had compunction when they commenced,

exercising yourself in meditation on your sins, examining your heart, and seeing in your trial the hand of a holy and just God who is yet willing to suspend, in some measure, the course of a life spent far from Him? Have the sufferings of the body made you think about the healing of the soul; and the fear of losing a fleeting life on the frightful evil of losing the life of eternity?

Have you exercised patience and reflection while they continued, calling to your help the minister of the Lord, seeking to get good from those days of repose, and considering the time of sickness as one long Sabbath, which the Lord's mercy has intended to give you, in order to make up for so many Sabbaths employed quite otherwise than in serving Him? Has it brought you the opportunity for Christian thoughtfulness, serious reading, holy conversation, and fervent prayers?

Lastly, I ask, have you been faithful since your recovery? I could name several here, whom I have seen in sickness, return to God and deplore their errors and their forgetfulness of eternity. I have heard them supplicate, like Hezekiah, the Lord to lengthen their days, and promise Him a more Christian life; and the Lord has acted according to the terms of your prayer. Have you done your part? have you kept your promises? have you glorified Him? have you gone on in newness of life? Are you more fervent, more chaste, more gentle, more laborious, more charitable, more disposed to prayer, more occupied with things above, than you were before that visitation? God called you; have you answered? God knocked at the door; you promised to open; have you opened? Has He entered? Is Jesus Christ in you? O, my brethren, these questions, which I put to myself, I address to you, in the name of the God who has visited us, and who has healed us; and it is to Him, it is to that great Searcher of the hearts and of the reins that we must give account to-day

in the secret of our consciences, as it is to Him that we must answer on the last day, when the secrets of our consciences will be unveiled.

III.—It is possible, however, that several among you have not felt bound to apply to themselves the reflections which they have just heard. They have not near them those whose state of health makes them uneasy, and they have never known sickness themselves: our reflections are, therefore, strange to them.

Yet it is to them also that our address is intended; and that for two reasons, which may appear to them opposed.

The first is, that although they neglect to think of disease, it may yet come suddenly and strike some persons most dear to them, or lay themselves on a bed of suffering, and soon after on a bed of death.

Oh, be then prepared for that dispensation, I entreat you; prepare your family for it, and occupy yourselves unitedly with what must be then your only true resource and your common consolation, as well as your assured refuge, against the terrors of the future, and against the formidable judgment of the last day. Have you established in your houses that family worship which has so often been recommended to you? If you have delayed till now, promise the Lord, here, in His temple, to commence it this day. Then, if one of you is about to be visited with illness, it will become easy for you to be sweetly occupied together with eternal things and the promises of Holy Scripture; then the minister's prayers, and those which you will present yourselves at the bedside of the sick one, will no longer seem a funeral ceremony, a message of death. Think, whoever you are, that at least a last sickness, more or less short, a last illness which people call agony, an inevitable and last illness which they call death,

must strike you soon, in one way or another, and, perhaps, by the most sudden blows. Be then ready, in order that it may not be terrible, in order that it may not cast you before the tribunal of God as wretched ones who are not converted and who have no Saviour! Be ready, in order that it may be sanctified, that it may be blessed, that it may be to the glory of God, and that they may say of you, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is dead;" or, rather, "Lord, Thy friend sleepeth, but Thou wilt awake him!"

My second reason for begging you to hear and ponder our reflections of to-day is that, by an unhappy inconsistency, at the very time when you occupy yourselves so little, for the most part with the thoughts of your last illness, there is a sense in which it may be said that you count too much on it, and that you place a certain confidence in it in the secret deceptions of your heart. When you are reproached with your present lukewarmness, and when your conscience in secret blames you for it, you hasten to reassure yourself that the days will come when, seeing the approach of death, you will have all the time to prepare yourself, and better than you could do now, to meet your God. You would not like to die in the state in which you are; but when that reflection comes across your mind, you are eager to blunt the point of it, and to reassure yourself with the hope of those happy effects which a last illness will, without doubt, you think, have for you.

Ah! undeceive yourselves, I entreat you! If you would like your last illness to produce these effects, think about it from the present day; prepare yourselves for it without delay, and "Seek the Lord while He may be found." I can assure you that of all the sick persons whom I have seen die, I have known very few to whom death did not come in a manner unexpected. The sufferings are absorbing; the fever stuns;

their friends, their remedies, their cares invade them; they are plunged into a half-lethargical sleep; they are incapable of long-continued thoughts; they are less recollected than ever; and death comes to them like a thief in the night. “The end of all things is at hand, be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer!” May God give us His all-powerful grace! Amen.





ON THE TRUE LIFE OF A NATION.

By DR. PRESSENSE, *Paris.*

"Righteousness exalteth a nation."—Prov. xiv., 34.

THE sacred writer from whom we have borrowed this beautiful saying had especially in view the ancient people of Israel. These had a grand and exceptional religious calling. God had made a covenant with them, altogether of a special kind; they were His people, the people from whom the Messiah was to come, and separated from all others. We have not now to seek the causes of that election and its aim. It is at least a fact that religion had then of necessity a national character, which gave a particular value to the maxim of Solomon. The new economy has abrogated all these distinctions. No longer are these exclusively national privileges; religion is not confined by any frontier. People of their own accord recruit under all skies, and the Church, made up of all those who adore Jesus Christ, is just that new humanity unknown to antiquity and born at the foot of the cross. Do these principles which are connected with the more characteristic features of the Gospel take away all interest from that declaration: "*Righteousness exalteth a nation?*" I do not think so. If nationality no longer creates religious privileges, if it ought never to veil the grand idea of humanity, national differences nevertheless exist. This is a fact of some importance, and one which has its influence on

the development of the divine reign. Christianity moreover respects all sentiments that are truly national—attachment to one's country as well as attachment to one's family: it strips them of all selfishness, it purifies them, but it accepts them. It has even given us an example of them in its most authentic representatives. Jesus Christ, who is its Founder, wept over the ruins of Jerusalem. St. Paul was willing to be accursed for his countrymen—a sublime paradox, which was nothing else than a flight of his charity. The eastern and western Christians loved their native land, although it cast them forth from its bosom and slew them, and at the very moment when St. Augustine contrasted the city of God with that of men, he eloquently expressed patriotic sorrows at the view of the first inroad made into the empire.

I add that the principal field of our Christian activity is in our own country. Just as the apostles were first and foremost sent to the Jews, we are, in the first place, sent to our fellow citizens, and it is in our native land that we must try before every other to plant the cross. How important thoroughly to know its religious and moral state, in order to present to it the truth in such a way as will answer to its needs at this moment. Let us not forget any longer that we all breathe the air of our country. Our spirit is, as it were, bathed in that atmosphere of ideas and general prejudices which surround us. We feel, in good as well as in evil, the influences of the national genius. We must account for the nature of these influences in order to re-act against them, at first for ourselves, and then for our fellow citizens whom they carry away. From all these considerations there results the necessity of our being well acquainted with our country. The words of Solomon, which we have quoted, furnish us with the best mode of appreciation possible in order to form a correct opinion of a nation. Its real elevation depends on the development of righteousness in its midst. Do we then wish to know the exact degree of

our elevation, we have only one thing to do, and that is to ask ourselves what we are in the light of righteousness,—that is, in a moral point of view. Let no one fear that I am descending, even for a moment, from that high and serene region where Christian preaching should maintain itself, or that I should ever humble it so far as to throw it into the confused vortex of the passions of the day. No, as preachers, we know but one party, that of God and of Jesus Christ. We have but one enemy—sin ; and we have but one aim—that of saving souls. It is in the very name of that sacred motive that I enter upon this delicate subject, which at first view may astonish, but which should bring us back promptly to some more serious aspects of practical Christianity. Our duty is to give attention to the signs of the times, for they are rich in teachings, and bring us duties which come to us from God Himself.

That righteousness exalts a nation, is the divine point of view. It is not the world's point of view. What elevates a people in its eyes is external glory, power, and conquest. Well, it is deceived. The elevation which is not based on justice has no strength ; unjust success is only a brilliant infamy. In an unjust victory the conquerer is in reality abased, and the conquered elevated. Moreover, the success obtained under these circumstances will have no duration, it will end in shame and chastisement. To deny this is to deny the divine government. Whoever admits it knows well that history is, after all, a minister of divine justice, and that whatever nation or individual has sown evil is doomed to reap death. The crop may delay, it will rise. It has never failed. Justice has its revenge, beginning here below, before that complete and terrible revenge which is reserved for it against the day of the Lord. Order must reign in the kingdom of the Most High, and when the practice of justice has not maintained it there, chastisement must bring it back again. "I only passed by," says the sacred writer, when speaking of the triumph of the

wicked, "and he was already no longer there." If we do not measure time by our short years, if we remember that to the Just Judge a thousand years are as one day, we should recognise that the triumphs of wickedness, however insolent they may have been, have been followed almost immediately after by the hour of punishment. To them may be applied that saying of Pascal's, regarding human life: "However brilliant the comedy has been, the last act is always bloody." Yes, justice alone elevates a nation morally and outwardly. To know this, no more is required than to remember that God reigns, and that He is the Holy of Holies

But it is not on this aspect of our subject that we have to insist; we cannot however avoid touching upon it here. It is another side of the question which it behoves us to consider. Righteousness, in the sense in which we have taken that word, is already a result; we must ascend to its principle within us. Indeed our acts are the manifestation of our feelings. The imprinted acts of justice reveal the feeling of justice. It is from that feeling that they proceed. It follows that a nation will be elevated or abased according as moral feeling and right conscience are more or less developed in it. All solid greatness comes therefrom: the strength of a community is connected with its moral earnestness. That is true in the social as well as in the religious point of view.

Moral earnestness is the solid and unyielding foundation of the social structure, the rock which keeps it sheltered from tempests. As far as this rock has not been reached all is vacillating, and the most beautiful constructions are threatened with an approaching ruin. Society is a *mêlée* of interests, a tumultuous crowd of passions, which clash and make war with one another, as far as the notion of right has not penetrated it, and that notion has influence only when it is vivified by the feeling of duty and of moral obligation. Then only has the edifice its foundation and its cement; law is no longer an

inconvenient fetter, of which one seeks to rid one's self as much as possible, it is voluntarily accepted. Placed under the ægis of conscience, the great social guarantees become sacred, and the moral sap circulates in the whole body. Duty protects right, like an austere and incorruptible sentinel; the inevitable crisis and agitations in a society of human beings are transient and limited. The feeling of justice ends always by appeasing the angry billows, and moral law, generally accepted, marks for them a limit which they do not overleap or which they do not long pass. That ideal has never been realized, but it is not less true that the more the moral feeling and right conscience predominate in a nation, the more it approaches it. *It is righteousness which elevates it.*

No doubt social elevation has strength, but what is it when we compare it with the elevation which results from the religious life? After all, that alone is immortal, the other is only of short duration. The essential aim for man is not to elevate as much as possible the level of his earthly life, which is fleeting, but that of his religious life, which is eternal. There is, moreover, involved in that a question of salvation, a question which to Christians is one of life or death. The religious elevation of a people, by which I understand its religious development is, what ought, in the first place, to occupy us, and in preference to all other things. I add that the social state of a people positively depends on its religious state. A society has never been seen to prosper when religion was in a low state in it. Man shapes his entire life after his ideas concerning God. That has always been seen, that will always be seen, to the honour of human nature or rather to the glory of Him who made us in His image.

It is evident to us that the development of the religious feeling is in close relationship with the moral feeling. They grow strong or become weak together. Religion develops conscience, but in exchange it finds in it its best auxiliary.

There is thus between these two great spiritual powers a constant reciprocity. Religion educates conscience, and conscience offers religion its first point of contact and its firmest fulcrum. I speak of a religion worthy of that name, and not of those baleful religiousisms which are mockeries of true religion,—as Pascal says, “just as false eloquence is a mockery of that which is true.” True religion is a religion of holiness, and consequently its fulcrum is the organ of the holy and divine in us, which is conscience. Its first words are : “ *Happy are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.*” True religion is the religion of the Gospel ; of it especially can we say that it educates conscience and finds in it a prop : it awakes its benumbed powers, it purifies its ideal, but it also makes to it its most serious appeal. What can Christianity do without the conscience ? How will it conquer sinful man without it ? How will it pierce it with those divine motives which it would not be able to resist ? How will it cause it to understand the necessity of pardon ? How will it lead it to take hold on the grand and bleeding atonement of Calvary, triumphing over that convenient religiousness which sets at naught God’s right, and which covers its moral frivolity under the appearance of indulgence ? How, without that, will it inspire into it the desire of holiness ? Jesus Christ is the desired one of conscience ; it is conscience, and she alone, who gives seriousness and depth to the impressions of the heart. There lies that good ground where the fruitful seed germinates. Suppress conscience, and Jesus Christ has no longer anything to do in humanity. The affinity of man with the Redeemer is measured exactly by the development of his conscience, and that is why the first work of the Redeemer is to develope it. Thus, then, the more feeble and obscure it is in a nation, the farther will that nation be from true religion and, consequently, from true grandeur. On the contrary, the firmer conscience, and the feeling of justice and of duty, the more will true religion reign over it and load

it with her benefits. In that respect, also, we should recognise that it is righteousness which elevates nations.

Thus, if we now wish to estimate the true degree of our nation's elevation or debasement, we have only to ask where it is in the moral point of view. I should not at all like to fall into exaggeration or injustice. I recognise all the beautiful gifts with which the French nationality has been loaded—that lively and penetrating intelligence, that ardour and that soaring of conception, that heroism and that prowess in action, that facility to set to work in noble causes, that heart easily moved, that natural kindness, that generosity of instinct.

Yes, I recognise, and with pleasure, all those amiable gifts which make the charm and influence of our national genius; but conscience, conscience,—that is to say, the essential thing, the basis of all righteousness, of all real greatness,—where is it among us? I should like to be deceived, but I am afraid I am not deceived, when I say that it is deeply injured. Yes, what is especially diseased and enfeebled in France is the conscience. I recognise, and state with joy, happy exceptions; but, in a general manner, I have the feeling that conscience was never more compromised and more blunted among us than to-day. See, then, what it supports,—what degrading doctrines, in fact, it supports,—what flagrant immoralities it supports,—what practical or theoretic materialism it tolerates. It is a very long time since its mighty voice has been heard raised with power. Its protestations against evil are rare and feeble, and frequently disguise cowardly compromises. What strikes us is, not so much the violence of evil as the weakness of our resistance, and the languor which paralyses us. To what purpose is it to present evidence? If you do not share our opinion, if you have resisted the arguments drawn from facts on which it rests, we shall not restore you from an incurable optimism.

If you have eyes to see, you have seen what we have, and you have groaned over it like us.

Is it not from that enfeeblement of conscience that all our misfortunes come ; and does it not seem that God has meant, by an overwhelming demonstration, to persuade our frivolous and thoughtless race of the truth of Solomon's words ? Is it not for want of moral seriousness that we are struggling in agitations so long and barren ? We have not built our house on the rock, and it has not resisted the storm of our passions. Is there a people more enamoured with the abstract notion of right, and which violates it more easily ? Is there one which respects the law less, and which has oftener learnt what it costs not to have the knowledge of self-restraint ? Conscience is so feebly awakened in it, that our nation cannot respect its most holy manifestations, nor has it yet learned the most elementary consequences of that sacred right, inherent in man, of belonging only to God in a religious point of view. The most absurd prejudices are still in circulation in that respect, and the duty of professing and of spreading one's faith is seriously admitted by only the *élite* of the nation, that is to say, by a feeble minority. What proofs we could heap up of that decline of conscience. Consider what is read and admired to-day in this country, taught at school by such fine geniuses in France of Pascal and of Bossuet. Recognise in that lamentable abasement of our national literature, corresponding to so many others, that if righteousness exalts a nation, the obscuration of the moral sense has exactly the contrary effect at all points of view. Yet if you show me, by way of consolation, all our material greatnesses which I have not to describe here, I will say that, whilst recognising their value, they do not console me. Hundreds of leagues of iron ways, the most magnificent industrial progress, and the most brilliant luxury, appear to me but a poor compensation for the decline of conscience. Far from comforting us, this

greatness makes us uneasy; for the more material resources a man has, the more he needs moral force, under penalty of bending under accumulated riches, and of being no longer anything more than the slave of matter while appearing its conqueror. The beauty and sumptuousness of the idol only cause the idolater to perish the more surely.

That is, then, a primary elevation which is wanting to us. We go down the slope of a social decline. I do not believe that the Christian ought to be indifferent to such a fact; he is the friend of righteousness in all its domains, and the born defender of all noble causes. Indifference to the state of his country is not allowed him, under the pretext that he is the citizen of a higher city; for goodness, truth, righteousness in all their applications belong also to the city of God. Yet, I admit, if to that relative fall in the social domain there corresponded religious progress, I should find therein a powerful consolation, in thinking of the sublime compensation which would await so many saved souls. That contrast is sometimes to be met with. Thus, in the days of the Roman decline, the Church was seen to go forth young and triumphant from the midst of the ruins. To-day such a contrast has less chance of appearing. The relations between the social and the religious sphere are closer, because modern society is, in many respects, the creation of the Church. We think, then, that what hinders progress in the one sphere, hinders it also in the other. How should religion gain adherents in the moral waste? How could it secure its rule where every fulcrum is wanting? When it is found before a blunted conscience it has but one thing to do, that is to reanimate it, to awaken it; to revive the moral sense, to re-educate it. But if it happened that the predominating form of religion, in a demoralised country, was made precisely in order to lull conscience to sleep; if it happened that that form of religion vivified in times of old, like the ancient French catholicism,

by a powerful moral breath, became more and more materialised, at least as a whole, and apart from those happy exceptions which maintain the true Church on the earth; if it were found that that form of religion had for its chief design the paralysing of the moral forces, and reducing them to a state of passivity, by demanding an absolute submission to a tradition of men; if it substituted for convictions freely accepted, formulæ blindly repeated; for the spontaneous movements of the mind, ceremonies; if that religion were, in fine, the ultramontanism of the nineteenth century, that ultramontanism unbridled in its servility, ought we then to be astonished at that decline of the conscience? Let it be seen what has been done with it in the countries where these influences reign undivided. It is often no more than a corpse: What is to be thought of the influence of a form of religion which, in its most exaggerated but also most authorised representatives, is not content with putting conscience to sleep but tramples it under feet, and injures it in its most elementary notions, a heathenish trade, when it defends the sacred right of a father; and, not content with this, justifies, in the name of God, the most monstrous iniquity? Ah! let it be known if righteousness elevates nations; it, and it alone, elevates churches. What is an unjust religion? It is a religion which presents to man a God which is not worthy of him, a God worse than he, because he insults the better part of him, his idea of justice and of injustice. It is a dangerous game to brave and insult the human conscience. What is sadder is, that very often confounding one of the forms of religion with religion itself! it turns away indignantly to go and pervert itself elsewhere with infidelity! That is the great peril of the moment. Conscience is between two abysses—it undulates from superstition to impiety, and these are equally fatal; and it is thus that thousands of souls perish quite near that cross erected for their salvation!

That is the wonderful tragic side of our subject! That is what must be recognised with a firm courage! That is the motive of a great affliction, but also the stimulant of a great activity!

What is our work? Our work is in proportion to our powers; and they are great, if we commence by recognising that we are nothing without God, because then His whole power is added to our weakness; our work is to labour to reawaken conscience in our country, in order to reanimate faith in Christ there. Then will our country comprehend that those who have said from the bosom of formalism and superstition that they represented Christianity were deceived, because then it will be ripe to comprehend and receive that divine religion which is at once the religion of the Gospel and of conscience. It would be necessary for all those who are in earnest about Christianity, who are shocked by error and injustice, to be sought for, found, and leagued together in this work, or at least if such a federation were still impossible, each one should put all that he has of breath, of fire, and of strength, at the service of Jesus Christ. Nothing will better reawaken conscience than the saddened accents of true piety, in whatever place they are heard, in the preacher's pulpit, who bewails as much confusion in his own church as in ours.

That is not all; we must look at the best means of reanimating conscience. When it is drowsy, so is individuality also. The awakening of the one is the awakening of the other. When the conscience is asleep there is no more avowed individuality. Man becomes a wave on the vast sea, borne and rolled about by the movement of its tides. He takes no personal part in social life, still less in the religious life. People believe for him, they decide in his name, he is an inert thing, he is not a moral being. Let conscience be awakened, and then he goes forth from the

confused mass; he enters into relationship with God, and says to all human traditions, what the men of Sychar said to the woman of Samaria: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Saviour of the world." He bears about everywhere that spirit of individuality, and society profits from what profits the Church. Thus everything that will develop the religious individuality will develop, at the same time, the conscience. That is why we give so great importance to what we call Christian individualism; that is to say, to that religious tendency which seeks everywhere to reanimate personal faith, and to give it all its importance, through the institutions of the Church, as well as by the conception of our relations with God. In saying this, we raise ourselves far above every mean consideration. We take the question in its height; that is to say, at the point where evangelical Christians more and more meet it. I am deeply convinced that it is there, and not elsewhere, that the safety of society, as well as of the Church, is to be found.

The question is put to-day, not without disquietude—what did Christianity intend in founding the Church, and are the means of grace, which it has entrusted to the Church, means of oppression? It is a matter of importance that we should scatter these prejudices and fears, by showing what valuable resources piety would find in the Church, properly understood. We must establish that the institutions, which seem otherwise destined to stifle conscience, re-animate and vivify it when they are drawn to their evangelical meaning. That great cause of true Christian individualism should now be pleaded with power. Others will win it after us before the universal Church, we ask only the honour of serving it. Everything invites us to it. Along side of the evil which we have unsparingly pointed out in the bosom of our nation, are there not some encouraging symptoms? Do we not see eloquent

men, men who have the right of speaking to their country, put their finger also on the wound and point out the remedy which, in their eyes as in ours, is the awakening of the religious individuality. Many wants trouble hearts, many aspirations rise to God. It is the time of building, in some sort, a city of refuge, ready to open to all those whom St. Martin called men of desire,—all those who do not resign themselves to so much moral abasement !

Why should we despair ? Have we not seen what can become of our French race when the breath of true Christianity animates it. How can we forget the wonderful types of the reformation presenting themselves on a ground of frightful corruption. Who has not seen, just as if he had known them, those noble defenders of our creed, of such austere character, such manly courage, the champions and martyrs of the faith. The sight of such men does more to awaken conscience than the most pressing appeals. True holiness has never allowed of indifference. It has often awakened hatred, but there was already an awakening. The point of the sword had penetrated to the heart and had wounded it to the quick. The cold and polished armour was laid aside, the tender point had been found, and, after a first cry of anger and of grief, the stricken conscience revived. Everything does better than torpor, everything does better for Christianity than universal approbation, let us say rather than universal disdain.

To work then, evangelical Christians ! We have pointed out to you an infallible and sure means of reviving the moral sense round about us. Take earnestly in hand your religion ! Sanctify yourself for those who perish about you ! Shine as lights in the midst of that unbelieving and perverse generation, and show to that world, which has forgotten it, what it is to bear the cross of Christ, and what power is hidden in the holy sufferings of sacrifice.



JESUS CHRIST, ALWAYS LIVING AND INVINCIBLE IN HIS MEMBERS.

By A. KNAPP, Pastor, Stuttgart, Wurtemberg.

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole: be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there any salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.”—Acts iv., 8-14.

THIS narrative is a transaction in connection with the judgment of the Sanhedrim or great council of the Jews—fallen long ago into pieces. This council consisted of chief priests, elders, and scribes, and had its seat at Jerusalem. It possessed extensive authority, taking cognizance not only of religious matters, but of appeals from inferior courts of justice, and of the general affairs of the kingdom. Doubtless the council would have liked best that the name of Jesus, after His crucifixion, had died away without a trace. But, against their will, they were made aware that the Crucified One had

not **only risen, but even in the midst of Jerusalem**, by the miraculous power of His apostles, was still as strong and as victorious as He had been during His earthly life. It so happened that St. Peter and St. John had met with a beggar, lame from his birth, at the gate of the temple, who looked imploringly at them, and St. Peter had told him: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!" Thus saying, he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. And lo! "immediately," the sacred volume reports, "his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God!" And all the people saw him with the utmost amazement walking, and leaping, and praising God. Whereupon St. Peter preached that glorious resurrection sermon, in consequence of which several thousands of souls were incorporated into the Church of the Lord.

We should fancy that such a great and wonderful event, which occurred quite publicly, and the divine intention of which was so openly manifest, ought everywhere in the higher circles to have produced a blessed fruit, that is to say, deep repentance and joyful belief in Jesus, the formerly so dreadfully mistaken Son of God. But this was not the case. The old enemies and murderers of the Lord—the arch-hypocrite Caiaphas at their head—the Pharisees and the Sadducees—otherwise extremely inimical to each other—were here again fraternally united, and vented their fury against Jesus by clothing it in official and ministerial procedure. The apostles were arrested and tried; but not they, but the Holy Spirit, who, according to Christ's promise, was in them, stood before the bar. Therefore the order of things was reversed. Elsewhere the judge has the first word and the prisoner must humble himself; but here the arrested men spoke, and the judges must grow dumb where reasons of heavenly truth were

discussed. Empty, haughty, commanding words of perverted authority and cruel abuse were the last powers wherewith these unbelievers tried to sustain their tottering edifice, till it broke asunder in flaming fire above their heads. For God was the Supreme Judge.

In that worldly style Christ's holy life-giving truth has since often been accused, arrested, tried, and condemned by those whom the psalmist pictures with the deeply significant word: "They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth." But still Christ's living truth walks freely along. Openly and privately unbelief has tried, in a thousand various ways, to suppress the truth of the risen Saviour in His Testament as well as in His Church; but it has never succeeded for any length of time, nor will it succeed in future, because Christ is infallibly seated at the right hand of God, and because His Church, which is doing homage to His divinity, shall not be overcome by the gates of hell.

I will, under His blessing, try to show you *how Jesus Christ is always living and invincible in His members.*

- I. Before the judgment-seat of the civil power.
- II. Before the judgment-seat of worldly wisdom.
- III. Before the judgment-seat of history.
- IV. Before the judgment-seat of the conscience.

Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, the Crucified and Risen, lives and reigns now truly, at the right hand of God, as the Lord of heaven and earth, as the Lord of the living and the dead, as the glorified, absolute Head of His Church, which, by His Holy Spirit, He gathers out of the wide world, enlightens and adorns with His gifts, preserves in the true faith, and sanctifies and makes perfect. "He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." This He has proved since the beginning, either as independent King of time and eternity or in His members; that is to say, in His believing people who are

united with Him, the Head, and draw their life from His inexhaustible fulness. And this adamant ground will subsist as long as the Church of Christ rests on the precious corner-stone, Jesus Christ Himself.

I. He has proved this, and is still proving it, before the judgment-seats of the civil or ecclesiastical powers who resist Him or His people.

The dispositions of that power, before whom He stood Himself, compared with His, sufficiently show to every candid man how infinitely superior He was to His judges, in piety, wisdom, love, humility, and holy zeal for the cause of God and of mankind. They were zealous for their own glory and worldly power, for self-chosen human statutes and ordinances, and hollow uniformity of a long-established, pompously-adorned service, below which they imagined to be able tranquilly to satisfy their imperiousness and all the remaining hosts of their passions. He never sought His own, but was zealous for the glory of His God, for the eternal word of truth, for the salvation of lost souls, for which those rulers did not care at all. He openly announced His doctrine and denounced the public sins and vices of His age. But they took that amiss, because they did not feel disposed to let anything rise up that surpassed their low measure, and because he "that doeth evil hateth the light," they acted clandestinely against Him; and, because publicly they could not prevail, they tried to get rid of Him by a prompt act of arbitrary power; and, because He struck them in the broad daylight with the two-edged sword of the Spirit, they polished in the hour of darkness their murderous poniard against Him, testifying thereby that they could not publicly stand before His holy eye and the power of His blameless life.

They did not fare better when they instituted *an official inquiry against His apostles*.

Of a sin, a bad design, a given scandal, they could neither accuse Him nor them with any appearance of truth. Their fury was chiefly poured on the fact that Christ, with His disciples, stepped forth *so freely and publicly*; for ossified presumption can bear that the least, because, of course, it finds its best account where everybody obediently holds his tongue and submits to a dead magisterial form. Already, when trying the Saviour, they had done their utmost to condemn Him, by producing witnesses. But their testimony did not agree together, because it is the curse of liars and perjurers to contradict each other, often against their own intention. They considered His noblest testimonies as a deadly crime, therefore they treated the words and acts of His disciples in the same way. But they were not more successful with them. It could not be proved that they had rendered themselves guilty of any falsehood, of any hypocrisy, of any malicious stratagem, of any fanatical sentiments, of any rebellion against the established law. Their only crime consisted in being the followers of Jesus—living Christians: a crime on account of which the spiritually dead in the world have already so much written against the children of the living God, and have so many times examined and tried them. But where is the guilt, when a man seeks his soul's salvation in Jesus, the only Holy One, when he finds it in Him, and in Him the rest and justice which is of value before God, and which he formerly vainly sought in all the world? Why should the arm of the civil power find fault when a man full of divine love confers a benefit upon another man, whom no earthly power is able to help? Or what concerns it the earthly rulers when a believing soul, in her sphere, peaceably and affectionately announces the mysteries of eternity, the way of salvation as it has been appointed for us by the Lord, and tries to lead her fellow-travellers from the broad way of death to the narrow which conducts to life? Or where is the crime, when a man,

believing in the word of God, with the weapons of justice attacks old errors, though they may be common, but which cannot subsist before that word, in order to re-establish truth and faith, peace and joy, in this unsettled world ?

The civil power is appointed by God and is His minister : " he beareth not the sword in vain." He has to see that " all things be done decently and in order," and that the laws, under the protection of which liberty and property, morals and human culture, are standing, be preserved. Magistrates have not only the right, but it is their duty, to punish everyone who does evil, without regard of person, and to maintain every noble institution sanctified by God in His Word. But they do not stand *above* but *below* the Lord ; and, above all things, they must do homage to *His rule*, and serve *His revelation* in faith, and wherever there are good and holy things, not put them down, but rather promote them. But very often the powers of this world have not done this, but, by a reprobate and unbelieving mind, clinging to long established, rotten customs, have not only caused innumerable injuries to the kingdom of God, but have also abused their outward official authority, to their own obduracy and damnation, as is evident from numerous dreadful warning examples of history. Think only of the old persecutions of Christians, of the crimes by which thousands of harmless believers, under the mask of the civil or spiritual power, have been persecuted and tormented ; think especially of the cruel forms of unbelief by which, to many, yea, to the most decided witnesses of the Lord, both life and ministry have been embittered in so frightful a way ; and apply to it as the due measure the twenty-third chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and ye will find reasons enough why the kingdom of God is developing itself freely and independently, and why those witnesses of the Lord, whose motto is " the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible," can quietly bear the ill-will and enmity of so many "princes of this

world, that come to nought." Often they are called "deceivers, and yet true;" rebels, and yet peaceable; often they are called obscurants, and yet "seek to be known openly;" sometimes they are secretly slandered and calumniated; sometimes rough and harsh insult and persecution are inflicted on them. But what is that? That belongs to the fashion of this world, which hates Jesus, the Holy One. The shame inflicted on them is yet but transitory, while they stand before their Lord with a clear conscience. God's Word justifies them at last, and when such human powers have sunk down, they bear within themselves the holy consciousness of the Church of God and the cheering testimony of the Holy Ghost: "I have not fled before Thee, my Shepherd, and what I have spoken before Thee, that is right." The Lord, in His people, has already suffered much of the rulers of this world, but He stands victorious and blameless with His cloud of witnesses; and the shame which they heap on His people falls at last back, but only on their own heads.

II. But in His people He has also been summoned a thousand times *before the judgment-seats of worldly wisdom*, although already, during His ministry on earth, He had much to do with the Pharisees and Sadducees. The former were the divines, the latter the philosophers of mouldering Israel. The more decidedly a people hasten to their ruin, the more numerous the theologians and philosophers illtreat the Word of the Lord, the more securely and selfishly they exalt themselves above it with their statutes, traditions, and systems, as a sign that the fear of God—that beginning of true wisdom—is no longer before their eyes. What a contradiction of self-just and self-wise sinners has Jesus endured against Himself, and what a scorn has worldly wisdom already opposed to Him and to His apostles—sometimes on the part of morals, sometimes on the part of faith, and the knowledge

of celestial things. He may often have been pained when He, the Heavenly Fountain of Light, was obliged to suffer Himself to be cried down and censured by the blind, when they mistook and misrepresented His noblest testimonies—when sometimes petrified superstition, sometimes haughty unbelief, rose against Him. But He comforted Himself by thinking that the wisdom of God “is justified of her children,” the children of light; that is to say, acknowledged as divine, because these do not make *the haughty flight of intellect*, but *obedience*, the criterion of the testimonies of Jesus; as He Himself has made this condition: “If any man will *do* His will who sent Me, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.”

From this lofty point of view of *inward being and acting*, Jesus wants us to judge His wisdom coming from Heaven; and from this stronghold He quietly awaits all the attacks of those who imagine to know something, while they know nothing. Therefore He had more to do with the *moralists*—like the Pharisees—among whom there were more vigorously constituted men, like Nicodemus and Gamaliel,—than with the Sadducees, the hollow, worldly, *intellectual preachers*, who at once rejected invisible things. A striving for righteousness relates, in any case, to the *heart and life* which He wants to renew and to sanctify. With men who are ready to practise, Heavenly Wisdom will rather unite itself than with the vain host of those who, without any active direction of their mind, only boast of their *science*. With a Simon or a Nicodemus Jesus kindly spoke; but there is no instance of His having associated with a haughty Sadducee: *He judged and condemned self-justice*, because in her confessors there yet existed a will which might be mended; but *He despised self-wisdom*, because she originates in a withered heart and a proud mind. With men *who do not wish to practise, but only to play the philosopher* and to emit sparks

of genius, the Hero of Golgotha will eternally have nothing to do, and He does not let them know His counsel; otherwise He would contradict His first promise: "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" Such self-conceited men resemble, before they repent, the drones in the hive—those lazy, contemplative insects, who, indeed, share the honey of the working bees, but in philosophical idleness sit down on flowers, perch themselves in the sun, or, with their swarming, prevent other industrious bees from gathering honey, till they are killed at last. He who once gave sight to the blind, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead; He who, risen from death, sits now, in the strength of an indissoluble life, at the right hand of God, never condescends to have anything to do with the haughty prudence of a sinner who does not understand his own body, does not comprehend a grain of sand, cannot cause a seed to grow, and is not able to explain the instinct of a bird, much less the foundations of divinity in which the Son of God had glory before the world was made.

Like Him, His people also stand before the judgment-seat of the wise men of this world. The apostles did not think very highly of the wisdom of their age. St. Paul, the great apostle, whose highly-cultivated ardent mind is even now the object of the noblest admiration and investigation, has, when he looks up to his Saviour, only words of contempt for the wisdom of this world. "The Lord," he exclaims, "taketh the wise in their own craftiness!" He goes even further, and says, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise!" Yea, he reaches the climax, when he unhesitatingly declares that the philosophers of this world are robbers, and cries into the vast dominions of Christendom: "Beware, lest any man spoil you," that is to say, spiritually plunder you and lead you captive, "through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of

the world, and not after Christ." St. Paul is right; for what can the servants of sin of this world give us, who eternally begin afresh, but never lead us to perfection, and with whom one system is always swallowing up the other? They are always repeating their human rudiments—that is to say, the monotonous A, B, C, of the fallen man—of a God whom they do not love, and who is unknown to them, of *freedom*, "while they themselves are the servants of corruption"—and of an *immortality* in which they possess no eternal mansions; while Jesus Christ is the eternal Alpha and Omega, of whom they know nothing and want nothing. He who does homage to them is, and remains, deceived. He who does homage to Jesus has in Him the fulness of divine wisdom and knowledge.

He who has an eye, let him see here. Why does one human system always tumble upon the other, and why does the Gospel always subsist in its bright and holy youthful freshness? I answer, they carry within themselves the death of human foolishness; but the Gospel, the wisdom of God. Therefore they die away powerless, without having yielded a lasting comfort and blessing to humanity; but even now, on an Easter morning, the blessed sound rings through the spirit: "Christ is risen!" And resurrection, divine joy, heavenly life, *that* is the best philosophy, the best finding of wisdom! He who *here* wants to outbid Christ in His glory, as well as in the shining ranks of His people, let him come forward! As long as ye do not come forward, and do not equal, or even surpass, Him with His people in the glory of the *new life*, your boastings are nothing; and the wisdom of the risen Saviour will shake her head at the children of death, as the daughter of Zion mockingly shook her head at the Assyrian captain, Rabshakeh! Not an arrow of yours shall come into Zion, and not a stone of her walls and bulwarks shall be loosened by your heavy artillery.

III. But there are other despisers who arraign Christ with His people *before the judgment-seat of history*. They, with an important air, take a very high position, either to avoid the risen and all-powerful Saviour, or to destroy Him entirely. These men form a palpable and gross standard of things, and do not estimate them by their spiritual weight and dignity: floating in grand display in the air is much more valued by them than the single, but loftier and life-giving ray of an eternal sun. Therefore we meet with so many profanely secular treatises on universal history, which resemble a new-fangled novelty, and which measure everything only by the outward appearance—books in which the life of an imperious Alexander and Cæsar is narrated much more circumstantially and complacently than the deeds of the quiet Rabbi of Nazareth. There, Christ is only put as a common stone into the temple of the world, while He is indeed the corner-stone of all the history of the world, the foundation of every truly human and divine life, the aim and end of every age, and the never-fading Sun of eternity. Yea, this is the stone which is despised and rejected by hundreds of historical builders, while God, the only Sovereign Lord, has made Him the top stone. From His appearance in the world Christendom dates the periods of our perishable globe forward and backward, and they do as wisely as we, who, by the course of the visible sun, measure our years. But there has sprung up a number of pirates, who presume to overturn the ground of all history, and who therefore venture to arraign before their tribunal our Lord Jesus, the pole of the whole world's history, and to treat His Gospel as if it were a fable or a fiction. What do they want? Would they like to raise from the dead old Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate; and, where these Jewish and Gentile sinners found no guilt in Him, after eighteen centuries of His blessed dominion, again try and condemn the Holy One? Has He not kept His word? Yes, He has; it is still standing before

us in heavenly, blooming strength, while the kingdoms of the earth and so many magnificent things of this world, powerless, like fading flowers, have sunk down before Him and still sink down. None of us all fulfil His historical mission entirely ; only Christ and His kingdom. All our plans and undertakings, even the most beautiful and attractive, carry, without Him, only the seeds of death within themselves ; but He and His wonderful people do not only carry eternal life within themselves, but also diffuse this life in millions of various ways to other beings around themselves. From the beginning His personal appearance has manifested and glorified the eternal God, and the sound of His name and His testimony has produced in all candid minds an essentially equal and living effect. From the beginning up to this time His divinely graceful person has been the object of the holiest love and veneration, of the most fervent adorations and psalms, of the sweetest hopes, of the noblest achievements and sacrifices. All the good spirits praise and love Him, the Lord. Who can gather around himself a cloud of witnesses full of mild rays and victorious flashes of lightning, in the domain of the spirits, like Him, the Word from the beginning ? Who can, in the presence of the vain-seeking and struggling of lost souls, of the temptations and victories of earthly spirits, of the faith, love, and hope of the most tried men, show psalms of peace and victory like Him ? Who can say before the judgment-seat of history : “ I am the light of the world ! ” and who has maintained this testimony, in silently majestic brightness, as well as in frightful judgments, up to this very day, like Him, directly through His office as King and Priest, and indirectly in His people ? These latter cleave throughout all the centuries as members to Him, the glorified Head. They all have doubtless been burdened, more or less with faults and infirmities, and are so even now-a-days ; but yet they remain, as He has said, in anticipating the victory of His cause, “ the

salt of the earth and the light of the world." They are still the proper flower, the quintessence of humanity, the teachers and comforters of our sinful generation, the true cultivators of solid knowledge, as well as the founders of the best charitable institutions to save the erring and the lost. None of the children of the world truly cares for the eternal salvation of his fellow-pilgrims here below ; those alone who have Christ's mind do it. They boldly seize the wheels of the history of the world, though unbelievers threaten to crush them therewith ; they stir up those who slumber in the long spiritual sleep of a Pharisee or a Sadducee ; they inform the poor world, from time to time, of the absolute necessity of a holy return to God in Christ, and thereby burden themselves with much heavier burdens, sacrifices, evil reports, and plagues, than is ever manifested here below ; but yet they stop the world in her fall, and save, with Jesus, whatever may be saved out of the great ruin and from the final judgment towards which this world is hastening.

Why is that Sanhedrim at Jerusalem even now-a-days standing in history ? Certainly not for its own sake, but because Christ's disciples were arraigned before it, who, on the soles of the feet of their triumphal march, carried into immortality many a miserable member of the human race. Of many despicable wretches posterity would never have heard, had it not been that they hated and persecuted the Christians. Such persons only live in the memory of posterity like Herostatus, who burned the temple of Diana at Ephesus to possess an immortal name. Therefore a great part of modern history only consists of bursts of sinful enmity against Jesus and His people, and he who wants to understand the history of popery in her long dark ages, let him read in our text how the Pharisaical Sanhedrim of Jerusalem treated the disciples of Christ, and he will find comparisons enough in our modern times, when people have not behaved better towards the Lord

and the holy cause of His kingdom. Yea, look only at the Church of the Saviour, how she is always struggling like a dove against the hawk, or like the swan sailing on the crystal lake against the rapacious pinions of the vulture, and, notwithstanding all her discomfitures, over which the spirit of the age blows its victorious trumpet, yet again, with new wings, she mounts in the air, and, with a new and still more glittering plumage, sails towards her home. *She is living* up to this day : the rest *die and perish* ! Sure as it is that God has raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, it is not less sure that the history of the kingdom of Jesus Christ will maintain her right against the history of this depraved world. "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" and "the world;" and, therefore, also the history of the world "passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." "And this is the Father's will," says Christ our Lord, "that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

This word hangs over the whole history of the world, as over Jerusalem's fragments and the ruins of other rejected nations. So over the death-bed of the sinner, who to this day dies without Jesus. But it is also an historical word of blessing, which best binds together Christian kingdoms, animates and penetrates every holy institution, and at last stands as an inextinguishable lamp over the death-bed of the poorest man, if such an one compresses his longing and his misery, to the sigh, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then even the history of the individual Christian becomes an epitome of universal history, and what at a death-bed is manifested as truth, is true in the face of all the heavens. Christians carry within themselves the foundation of the whole history of the world with respect to sin and salvation. But where the question is raised, who will finally conquer, who will eternally be in the right,

there they may, relying on an invincible host of experiences and in the name of their glorified King and Saviour, boldly risk a trial before their contemporaries and posterity.

IV. But Christ and His people also stand on trial *before the judgment-seat of conscience*. He in whom the piercing eye of the civil power can find no fault—he who must not be afraid of any researches of human wisdom, nor of the endless change of temporal images and creations—he already, in virtue of the *outward* strength and solidity of his cause, may appeal to the voice of the conscience; but still more, proclaim the *inward* life out of which he testifies and works, with that sublime word, “Everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice.” It is true, that against that many erring and malevolent spirits are protesting, pretending that in divine things one must proceed as coldly as a stone, and must, where the belief in holy testimonies is concerned, treat the heart only as a thoroughly subordinate being; yea, they complain, when faith denounces their sin and foolishness, very bitterly “that the orthodox people want to leave divine things to their conscience.” But has not Christ Himself done that, and does He not make it an unfailing consequence that a man, “being of the truth,” and following his conscience, must implicitly and unconditionally believe ‘Him and His Word of Life? This is just one of the finest jewels in His crown. He pays no regard to empty phantoms, to capricious productions of human witticism, but to that which stands the test of the fundamental want of the heart and of the conscience, that brief summary of all the mental faculties. From thence must follow true life, true faith, and constant wisdom; and then conscience is freed from its curse of sin, because divine grace unites itself with the human will. But *there* lies, also, the innermost reason of unbelief and of every contradiction against Him; *there* sticks the bitter root which, speak-

ing of His enemies, He once denoted with the expressive word, "*Because* I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not." Therefore He leaves each unbeliever's contradiction solemnly as a sin of the heart to his conscience, which, without Him, remains so rent; and announces to each the final decision in the unalterable testimony: "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, has One that judgeth him—the *Word* that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The Lord, as the true and faithful witness, would not have spoken thus, if His testimony did not agree with the innermost convictions of our conscience; therefore, also, with the rightly-understood intellect and with the rightly-discerning reason.

Now, as long as His people stand without guile to Him, the Son of God, and cleave to the holy utterances of His mouth, and walk accordingly, they may, as members of Christ's body, confidently appeal to the conscience of the world. In that spirit the apostles, after having been beaten, rejoicingly departed from the presence of the Sanhedrim. In that confidence they have, with all the martyrs and saints, worked, hoped, and suffered, and the glorious cause represented by them has received the victorious approbation of millions; that is to say, of all "who are of the truth," up to the present day. In the same way it will be approved by the consciences of all Christian men, for the cause of Jesus Christ is the concern of our innermost conscience, and can alone show its heavenly glory to each of us, when we receive Jesus as the King of our conscience, and implicitly follow Him. O, may He graciously grant us that, and help us, childlike, to walk in the luminous footsteps of His example and His word! Then we shall never, never stand on the side of His enemies; yea, not with a single movement in the domain of sin and error; then we shall never, by lukewarm words or imprudent conduct, dishonour Him or His people,

but as lights pass through the darkness of this world, benefitted in our own souls and edifying others, "showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." Yea, the Lord help us! Then we shall experience something of that vigorous element in which St. Paul lived when he wrote: "Our rejoicing is *this*—the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in this world!" Amen.



A FAREWELL SERMON.

By DR. D'AUBIGNÉ.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."—Acts xx., 32.

ST. PAUL speaks in the words of our text to the Ephesians. He had founded their Church, and had during *three years*, as he himself says (Acts xx., 31.), *not ceased day and night to warn each one of them with tears*. Now he returns from Greece, where he had continued a short time, and travels through Asia, hastening to Jerusalem. He lands at Miletus, not far from Ephesus, and foresees in the Spirit that he shall never again visit these parts where he had elevated the cross of his Lord. The apostle's heart is deeply moved. He cannot pass by a church so dear to him without bidding them farewell, without blessing them, without exhorting them to faithfulness. He causes the elders or shepherds of this Church to come to him, and delivers to them a stirring address, in which he shows them that none of them should see his face any more. Then, towards the end of his address, he utters the words of the text: "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*"

We are to-day in a similar condition. I must likewise bid farewell to you, among whom I have proclaimed

the kingdom of God : you have likewise come, like those of Ephesus, to hear the last words of my love and of my pastoral duty. In choosing this text, which is immediately connected with topics which have occupied us for some time, would I now place myself in any possible way in comparison with the apostle, and apply to myself what this holy man says of himself? No, I did not intend to do that. I know who the apostle was and who I am ; and feeling my entire inability to address to you any words adapted to this solemn occasion, I would rather, at a distance, follow this enlightened disciple, praying to Him who also stood by the apostle with help. I shall therefore endeavour to explain the feelings which filled the apostle of the Gentiles at this hour. We shall find that his feelings must become ours also, and that they also are ours ; they shall therefore be the subject for our consideration to-day. There are especially four of these observable in Paul, and also in us.

The first has reference to *the relation between Paul and the Ephesians*, among whom he had published the whole counsel of God.

The second is concerning *the counsel of God itself*.

The third was no other than *the ardent desire that all the Ephesians should comprehend this counsel*.

The fourth, *the hearty wish that all those might become firmly grounded who believed in this degree of mercy*.

Let us develop these four points :—

But do Thou, O Lord ! who hast so often been with us, be also present with us at this last meeting, and sanctify, by Thy presence and by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, the last words of the shepherd who is taking leave of his flock. Amen.

I. Without doubt the apostle, when he caused the Ephesians to come to him, was filled with ardent desire to see them

personally, to be once again in company with them, and unite the bonds of love afresh. And if there reigned also among them some want of union, like that which we observe between Paul and Barnabas (Acts xv., 39), he certainly wished to cover it with the veil of Christian love.

It appears as if we also had united in the same intention. Without doubt, there is not the least hatred in our hearts, and should there have been even anything resembling it, I am confident that the grace of God would have now removed it. But had I a mind to make this false supposition—should I have thought that there could have been in us traces of such dispositions—then would I say: “My brethren, shall we, when separating, separate otherwise than in the name of God, who is certainly love itself? And should our separation be an event out of which Satan may gain a victory?”

My brethren, it is our intention to separate. Only a few moments more and my feet will have left the walls of this city. My life passes away in another part; yours, here. Now, should we go about through the whole of this life with a heart which feeds within itself one single root of bitterness, what a sad attendant should we associate with during the course of our life on earth! What a wretched life should we prepare for ourselves!

And what would be the result when we had finished our course? Should we never see one another here again, we shall above; it would be before the throne of our God, our Judge, that we should, for the first time, be assembled face to face, with a heart that would be an abomination in His sight. Our meeting together would but strengthen the accusation brought against us. With what anguish, with what affright would our souls be filled, even before the Judge had spoken! And how would it be with us as soon as He spoke? What should we feel when He said: “Come to Me ye whom I have already united by the bonds of My grace and the preaching

of the forgiveness of sins. But ye who should have forgotten your respective offences in order to think only of your sins, which I wanted to forgive, come, that I may judge you ! ” Oh ! how should we approach this dreadful judgment-seat, before which the voice of the Judge summoned us.

Let us then, because there still is time, cleanse ourselves from this ignominious stain. “ *Behold He will feed His flock like a shepherd,* ” says the prophet of the Old Testament, when proclaiming beforehand the Saviour of the world ; “ *He will gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom.* ” (Isa. xl., 11.) Let us hasten into His arms and be one with Him. It is on the cross of Jesus Christ that the separated souls of the children of Adam are united with everlasting bonds. Let us all, at this last hour, proceed together, while separating, to the cross of Christ. Who would remain behind ? Come, let us all carry thither our impurity and our malice ; let us lie down before the cross, that the blood which there flowed for us while we were sinners may take away and destroy all the unrighteousness of our souls. Oh ! how should we deny this offering to Him, who alone is holy, and who did not deny us the offering of His blood.

Yes, let us all within this temple love one another with an ever enduring love, because for all of us there is paid, as you know, the same ransom price ; because for all of us the same Saviour has come down to all the hardships of this life, and to all the terrors of death. Lord, our God ! *hold up* before our eyes the holy banner of Thy Son’s cross, that all fallen but redeemed souls may around it unite themselves ! Oh, that this cross might nevertheless draw us on, that whilst we remain at His feet nothing in the world might separate us either from Him who died for our sins, or from those whom He also loved.

II. The second feeling which I perceive in the heart of

the apostle, has reference to the counsel of God, which he was called to proclaim. At the moment when he was about to separate himself from them for ever, as regards this world, he makes a solemn assertion—he confesses that he has preached to them what he was commissioned to preach. “*Therefore I take you to witness,*” he says, “*this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*” (Acts xx., 26-27.)

I must, therefore, if I propose to follow, as much as in me lies, the example of the apostle at this solemn moment, when I am separating from you, make a like confession.

Would that I could give the same testimony as Paul! Would I could, like him, say: “*I have kept back nothing. I have not neglected, day and night, to warn each of you.*” Would to God, I could say, I have, in the way after which I have proclaimed it to you, neither lessened nor lowered this glorious counsel of the mercy of the living God, which should be preached to you and every creature.

Yet if I am, at this hour, penetrated with the ardent wish that I had been more faithful, I can, I must, nevertheless, as regards the counsel of God, give the same testimony of it that St. Paul did.

I was not sent to you to bring mere human wisdom to you, or a wisdom which I myself had discovered, but to bring you *divine wisdom*. I came not as my own master nor as a servant of men, but as the servant of another Master, who is the Lord. And the call which I received is not to win souls to myself, but to the Lord.

Therefore, I now confess, that the wisdom which I have preached to you, is neither that of a man nor my own, but of God; this eternal wisdom through which that God, who is merciful to all, intends to enlighten, redeem, sanctify, and comfort guilty and sinful men. I confess that the food which I have offered you has been drawn by me out of God's Word,

the source of all regeneration and life ; yea, that which I have taught you is the same counsel which St. Paul says, he did not shun to declare in Ephesus.

At this moment, when I *lay down* this office which was *committed* to me in the bosom of this Church, I confess once more aloud this counsel of God. I lay before you for the last time the Gospel which I have preached to you, through which you are also saved if you hold it fast enough. (1 Cor. xv., 2.)

I have proclaimed to you, and I still proclaim to you, that a great fall has come upon the whole human race, as on each man in particular ; that we are far away from the state of innocence and holiness in which God formed us ; that the present condition of man is a mournful one, because he is not only in his mind and in his heart at a distance from the living and true God, but also subject to another power, seeking his own interest only and worshipping himself alone ; by nature inclined to follow the motions of indwelling sin, going after the prince of this world, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. (Rom. vii., Eph. ii.)

I have proclaimed to you, and I still proclaim, that there is no salvation for man as long as he is in this state ; but that he in this way draws down upon himself the just condemnation of the most Righteous Being, which must punish, and actually does punish, everyone who breaks the law in one point ; yes, that every man who does not use the means which divine grace offers him to be reconciled to God whom he has provoked, to come nigh to God from whom he is removed, will never see eternal life, but will certainly be damned.

Yes, my brethren, I have proclaimed to you all this of the counsel of God, and I proclaim it to you now. I in nowise withdraw it, but repeat it only with still more power in these last moments ; I take all the angels of heaven, God Himself, and your own heart, to witness, that this is the *truth, the only*

truth, as well with respect to the state of the human heart, as also the irrevocable doom of the impenitent.

I have also proclaimed to you, and I proclaim to you now, that if this is the state of man, no one could possibly have been saved had not the Father in heaven, the eternal love, conceived that great purpose of mercy which the apostle, by way of preference, calls the *counsel of God*, by which man should be saved, replaced in the rights of a child of God, and in the possession of the heavenly inheritance. I have *proclaimed*, and I proclaim to you now, *that the eternal Word was in the beginning with God and was God, and that by Him all things were made*; that the beloved Son of the Father Himself became man, just as we are, sin excepted, to fulfil this counsel of mercy. I have proclaimed to you, that this Mediator, who, eighteen hundred years ago, lived in Judea, did what was perfectly sufficient for all the requirements which God could make on the human race, that He fulfilled the law perfectly, in the stead of men, who continually transgress it. Yes, what is still more, I have proclaimed to you that this Jesus died for us, bore our sins; that He, the most blameless, suffered for us, the guilty, in order to procure for us access to His Father. I have proclaimed to you that after His atoning death, He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, and that He rules over all things, sitting at the right hand of God, where He is at this very moment while I am addressing you; that He dwells in the midst of us, and by His Holy Spirit in our hearts bears witness to the truth of what I just now utter. I have, therefore, proclaimed to you *salvation through Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary and the Son of God, the true Man and true God*.

I have proclaimed to you this counsel and withdraw nothing from it, but rather repeat it with greater power. I declare to you at this moment that none of us can be saved in any other way than through this Jesus; yes, I declare that since the time when God did so much on earth, since the death on the cross

the hope of a salvation, except by Him, is a most revolting blasphemy—a blasphemy which will certainly be fearfully punished when the Lord appears from heaven with the angels of His power. (2 Thess. i.)

I have proclaimed to you, and I proclaim to you now, that to procure this salvation, which is a gift of God's free grace, man has a threefold need. He must have *repentance, faith, and holiness*. I have proclaimed to you that God will make partakers of His grace only those who are contrite and of a broken spirit; who know the corruption of their hearts; their sinful life and the wretchedness of their present state; are sorry for their sins, and fly for refuge to divine mercy; deeming themselves unworthy of it, and yet sighing after it. I have proclaimed to you that God communicates this grace only to those who believe in it; I have proclaimed to you that He preserves it only to them who make use of it to sanctify the soul; who return the same love to their brethren which God has shown them, and who are diligent in good works.

All this I have proclaimed to you, and withdraw nothing from it. I know no other way to salvation, and no one can find another way than *repentance towards God our Father*, whom we have offended; and *faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*, who gave himself for us; and *sanctification through the Holy Spirit or Comforter*, who enlightens, and regenerates, and fits the man of God for every good work.

See here, my brethren, the counsel of God which I have presented to you, which Paul proclaimed to the Ephesians: *Therefore I take you to witness this day that I am pure from the blood of you all, for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.* (Verses 26, 27.)

This counsel is the wisdom of God, the perfect wisdom before which all knowledge and all human skill are but foolishness. It is the power of God to save all who believe in it.

It is the only thing which will stand when the wisdom of the world, and the might which resists the Lord and His anointed, shall have long since fallen into nothing. *Yea, Lord! heaven and earth shall pass away, but Thy word remains for ever.* (Matt. xxiv., 35.)

I am about to lay down the office which I have held among you. Alas! that it was not more calculated to bring souls to the Lord. Yet I confess aloud that, while separating from you, I cling to those very truths with which I set out, and which I have preached. I withdraw not one word which I have preached, but pray God to give me grace, wherever I may go, everywhere to speak freely, and without fear of man, and to preach this mystery of the Gospel. I beseech God for grace, when standing with one foot already in the grave and my tongue can no more raise itself, to rouse myself up and freely confess, "*There is salvation in no other, and no other name is given to men by which they should be saved.*" And when the dead arise, when all are brought to give an account, then will that of which I have spoken still stand and testify for me before the Judge; on this testimony alone I place my hope, my joy, and my glory!

III. But when the apostle stated that he had proclaimed the whole counsel of God, was it not his main object that those who, up till this time, had not understood, believed, and fully appropriated to themselves this counsel, might learn to understand it, accept it, and believe it? Oh! of what moment must it have been to him at this instant, when he intended to separate for ever from the Ephesians, to do so with the conviction that they were reconciled to God, saved, and heirs of heaven. My brethren, believe me, that my most ardent wish, also, at this moment when I am leaving you, is, to take with me the conviction that you have obtained peace with the Father and are heirs of life.

You will readily have perceived that during my office I have always turned to you with the invitation to come to Jesus, in order, through Him, to become children of God. Now, I ask you : *Have you followed this invitation ?*

One of the most important questions for me ; for if the object of my office was no other than to lead you to Jesus, you can easily think how important it must be, at this hour, for me to know whether I have attained to this object or failed.

Well, now, are there still some among you who, during the years of my mission to you, have not come to Jesus, as I expected and wished, as God's Word expects and wishes ; I ask you, will you then not come to *Him now ?* Will you not now, at the end of my ministry, come to *Him*, that I may be able to depart in peace ?

Forget, I pray you, at this moment, all imperfections with which the proclamation of this invitation was attended, and consider only the *invitation* itself.

Come, at this last moment, *come to Jesus Christ*.

And am I about the only one who invites you to this ? Ah ! do you not find, in your own heart, a voice which speaks more powerfully than I, and invites you to come to him ? Does not your heart perceive errors ; sins which, at the highest tribunal, are deserving of damnation ? Does it not bid you desire a sure forgiveness ? And where do you find this forgiveness ? Ah ! does not the same heart tell you that it is to be found only in Jesus Christ, in the knowledge of Him, in faith on His saving name ?

Does not your heart sigh after a happiness of a higher kind than all your possessions can give you ? *Does it not thirst after a water which springs up into everlasting life, so that whoever drinks this water will never thirst ?* (John iv., 14.) And where shall we find this happiness, where can we draw this water ? Does not your own heart tell you only ~~in~~

Jesus Christ? Consider the wants which there are in your hearts, as in the heart of every man, and come to Him that they may be satisfied by Him *who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*

Oh! why will you not now come? The hour in which a pastor bids farewell to those who were committed to him, is certainly an important hour; it is important in heaven. It is certainly one of those peculiarly distinguished moments when it pleases divine grace to open all the riches of its inexhaustible treasures, so that each can come and draw richly. Oh, come and buy without money and without price!

What *can* you fear? What kind of hindrances can you foresee? *Jesus Christ* is yours. You have a right to Him. You are consecrated to Him in baptism. Claim your right, approach with courage. Lay hold on *Christ*. Lay hold on the part that is assigned you in His salvation!

Has He not already called you? Has He not already invited you to Himself by my mouth? However great the weakness with which I proclaimed to you His grace, has not the truth of the thing more than once surprised you? Have you not been seized by the power which dwells in the great truths of salvation? Rises there not in your soul a voice which says: "Yes, this is true; it is really what God has caused to be proclaimed for our salvation and glory."

I pray you now at this hour to go to *Christ*. Know that without Him everything ends in wretchedness, downfall, and ruin. Rest on Him as the only foundation of your salvation. Say to Him, in your heart, "Lord! I will belong to Thee! Thou hast come upon earth for me; therefore will I be truly Thine!" Ah! Is there not a soul at this hour listening to the voice of love which the Son of God causes to re-echo in the heart? Is there not a soul here feeling drawn by these cords of love as he never before has been? Lord! Thou who at other times callest, call now also! Thou who formerly

in Galilee didst chain to Thy steps a great multitude of people, captivate all of us also to Thyself. Good Shepherd, take us up into Thy arms !

IV. And now, my brethren, I see only believers before me, all of whom have surrendered themselves to the Lord ; with pleasure I look upon all of you as belonging to the fold of the Lord, and I therefore address to you, ye disciples and redeemed of Jesus Christ, this last word of the apostle St. John : “ *And now, little children, abide in Him that when He shall be revealed, we may be glad, and not ashamed, before Him at His coming.* ” (1 John ii., 28.)

This feeling certainly penetrated, before all others, the heart of the Apostle. He wished that the Ephesians, from whom he separated himself, might abide in the faith as they had received it. This is also what I feel in respect of you ; but I can address only a few words to you.

Abide in Him. It is true I leave you, but He whom I have proclaimed to you never leaves you. If I could think that even only a single soul should become remiss in humility before God, in faith, in love to Christ, in zeal for good works, because He who has preached to that soul the word is no more there, oh, how vain would all my labour for this soul have been ! What sadness would fill my heart ! What a sad event would it be, if the removal of the minister could damage love to the Master !

Abide in Him ; fear not lest the strength necessary to this should fail you. What want of confidence would there be, if you fear that because a man is removed, you will no more be able to walk in the same way. How should this be the case ? Will the Lord not be sufficient for you ? All that I could preach to you came only from the Lord. Will the Lord not be able to give it to you now in another way ?

Abide in Him. Think of all that He has been to you ;

think of all His gifts of grace and *praise Him*; but whilst you praise Him, remember that this is only *the beginning* of His grace, that still more glorious blessings of grace await you, and that you have only to remain faithful in order to receive all of them.

Abide in Him, for what could you find without Him? What would you become without His grace? Dead branches on the living vine, which men would be obliged to gather and throw into the fire. Without Him you find only a mere nothingness; in Him, all treasures and all glory. If you could separate yourselves from His love, you would reap no other fruit than everlasting tears.

Abide in Him. I speak to you at this time as John the Baptist, at the moment when his office ended, and that of the Saviour of the world began. I point out this Saviour to you, and say to you, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He must increase and I decrease*. Yes, my brethren, to the Lord I point you; to Him I leave you; to Him I invite you fully to consecrate body and soul for ever.

Abide in Him, and contend therefore against sin; you dare no more yield. You should be holy, as He who calls you.

Abide in Him, and increase therefore in faith, that the eye of your soul may ever become clearer; that the knowledge of Jesus Christ ever more enlighten your souls; that faith may reveal itself in you as a power which, making you free from the world, binds you firmly to Him in whom you believe.

Abide in Him, and be careful to maintain good works. Let this ever be your adornment; let this in future be your work, to lay up a store resting on the right foundation. Seek Christ in all who suffer, and let your great joy be, while here below, to give again something to Him who has given so much to you.

Abide in Him. Watch and pray that it may become easy for you. Have a watchful eye on the enemies of your soul, that seek to separate you from the Prince of Life. Seek in Christ the power to withstand them. Defy their daring, and joyfully sing in spirit, "*We are more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us.*"

Abide in Him. This I entreat of you, as the last proof of your love. Then will feelings of joy be united with the mournful feeling of separating. I know then that you are well guarded; I know that you have life, that you have it for ever, and that all violence of pain and of death will fall in pieces when directed against you.

And now I commend you to God and to the Word of His Grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.

Yes, I commend you to Him; and it is my joy at this hour, that His power is greater than all men; that you, robbed of all other help, have in Him infinitely more than you need.

I commend you to God. At this hour I confidently pray Him to be a Father to you all, to bless all with spiritual blessings in Christ, to be your Shepherd, to lead you to the cool water, and feed you on green pastures. I appear before Thy presence, Lord! This is not merely a figurative expression. No; I appear now with Christ before Thy presence, and bend myself before Thee and commit them to Thee. I pray for them. Holy Father! preserve, in Thy name, those whom Thou hast given me. *I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst preserve them from evil.* (John xvii., 15.)

Young people, I commend you to God, that He may give you strength at the right time to forsake life from love to His name. Grown-up persons, I commend you to God, that He may cause you to know the blood which takes away even the

sins of long years, and atones for all those who are to appear before Him. Rich men, I commend you to God, that you may not let yourselves be led away by *your* riches, but put all your hopes in the living God. Poor men, I commend you also to God, that, before all things, you may become poor in spirit, and seek the meat which will never perish. Troubled ones, I commend you to Him, that you may learn to know true comfort, and find the only good which no power can rob you of.

To Him I commend you who are weary and heavy laden on account of your sins, you who seek God, who long after forgiveness and justification. Oh! how richly all this can be granted to you. You, also, who have found *Him*, I commend to *Him*, that you may be kept holy and unblamable till the glorious day of the Lord.

And when Paul had said these words, he knelt down and prayed with them all (v. 36). Let us also in spirit throw ourselves upon our knees, and, before we separate, pray together.

We praise Thee, Lord! for everything which Thou hast done in this Church during the five years that are passed; we praise Thee for every counsel which Thou hast communicated to us; for every comfort which Thou hast given; for every soul which Thou has saved; we praise Thee for the smallest feeling of edification which Thou hast bestowed upon our hearts.

Oh! praised be Thou that Thou hast showed us that Thine arm is still held over Thy Church, and that Thy Gospel is still powerful to the salvation of all those who believe in it.

Lord! we pray Thee that Thou wouldest, through Thy Holy Spirit, give prosperity, that the wholesome impressions which have been received may be powerfully strengthened in all hearts, that therefrom may proceed fruits of eternal life, and that they may be transmitted from the fathers to the children, and from the children to the children's children, so that Thy glory may be richly increased.

Lord ! Thou hast, in Thy Word, promised, *I will not leave you fatherless, I am coming to you. I will be your Father, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters.* (John xiv., 18 ; 2 Cor. vi., 16.) Thou art the Amen, and nothing that Thou hast promised will ever fail.

Lord ! be with the shepherd who goes from here ! Accompany him ; let him, in part, find again what he here leaves, and open to him a wide field to preach Thy Gospel.

Be with the flock which remains ; preserve these sheep under Thy arms !

O ! Lord Jesus Christ ! Son of God, incarnate, and crucified to atone for our sins, to whom should we go but to Thee ? Thou alone hast words of eternal life ; we commit ourselves altogether to Thee !

Farewell, my brethren ; I say to you, for the last time, farewell. It is difficult for me to part from you, but I know in whom I believe, I know in whom we have believed. I know He is the *Truth*, that He is the *Resurrection* and the *Life*. Farewell, therefore, and, perhaps, till the day when we shall be united before His throne.

To Thee, who was slain, and hast redeemed us to God with Thy blood, out of all nations, and tongues, and peoples, and hast made us to our God kings and priests, to Thee and to Him who sits upon the throne be praise, and honour, and glory, and might, for ever and ever. (Rev. v., 9, 10, 13.) Amen.





THE HIDDEN LIFE.

By DR. THOLUCK, *Halle.*

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”—COL. iii., 3, 4.



WHY do I see this place draped with the dark colour of death? Why does a solemn earnestness rest to-day upon your countenances still more than at other times when you come together here? You have come to commemorate your dead, and to put yourselves in mind of your own death.* Oh, that you oftener thought of it, and meditated on death before the altar of God: certainly it has often, when so considered, become to many the occasion of a new life.

And what would you that I should preach to you to-day? Perhaps, the assurance that each of your beloved ones, fallen asleep, has been borne on by a gentle wave into the haven of rest? Perhaps, that I should paint to you, with golden figures, how they all now fully rest in the green pastures, at that clear brook which, according to the word of prophecy, flows out of the eternal temple? But how, if I

* In most of the Protestant Churches of Germany there is an annual service in remembrance of the dead; it was on such an occasion that this sermon was preached.—TRANSLATOR.

to-day so preached to you, and, with sweet tones, rocked you into a gentle slumber, and the lightning of *death* struck you this night, so that you awoke in eternity and saw that I had deceived you! What should I answer you, when, from before the throne of divine majesty, you asked me, "Servant of Jesus Christ! why hast thou deceived us—deceived us from the spot where nothing but God's truth should be heard?" Beloved, I dare not preach to you what *you* would prefer—I dare not preach to you what *I* should like. No, what the *Lord* will, that I must preach to you. If *He* has said that the way is narrow and the gate strait, how dare I, a poor creature, venture to say the opposite? Therefore, ye who weep at the graves of your beloved ones, be not angry with me if I cannot scatter flowers upon all of you without distinction. I will, however, present you with a garland—an amaranthine garland—an imperishable, never fading, and unspotted garland, which, as the apostle says, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, the righteous Judge, will, at His time, give to all them who love His appearing. If all of your beloved ones have already won it, alas, I cannot tell; or if *all of you* shall win it, I am also unable to say; but let us all together fold our hands and pray, let us gird up our loins and so run, that we may win it. For the earnest word of the apostle says: "If any man also strive, yet is he not crowned, unless he strive lawfully."

Now, in order that we may strive lawfully for the incorruptible crown, let us, one and all, take to heart the words of our text: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

Only he who has led, in time, a life hid in God, will, in eternity, openly live with God. That is the solemn word which sounds in our ears here; and my discourse to you to-day shall be

confined to the proving of the *truth* of this sentence. But to perceive the truth of these words there is no more required than that I should first *unfold the nature of a life hid in God*, for its end is glory. Let us then, in our worship of to-day, *consider the life hid in God*, in its *beginning*, in its *progress*, and in its *end*.

A life hid in God—mysterious expression. How many of you lead a *hidden* life? An open and manifest life you all lead. Your enjoyments and your privations, your sunshine and your storms, your conflicts and your treaties of peace, are seen. But the Holy Scriptures, speaking of a *hidden* life of man, expressly state that, in the case of the Christian, in addition to that manifold and varied course of external occurrences, there is in the innermost soul a course of internal events also, a course of internal enjoyments and privations, of inward sunshine and of inward storms, of inward conflicts and of inward proclamations of peace. The Christian has not only an outward history—he has also an *inner* one. Woe to the Christian who, after a long period of absence, when he again sees his friend, can give him only an account of *that* history of his life, of *those* enjoyments and privations, *that* sunshine and *that* storm which have taken place before the eyes of all the world. But ye Christians, how many are there among you who, when they meet, have to relate to one another the history of a life *hid* in God? And yet from the throne of majesty will the summons be published to you all: “Man, where is thy history?” And what will thou then give a revelation of, thou poorest one, if thou hast only a history of thy life in the *world*, but not of thy life in *God*? This, therefore, is the first truth which we should depict to ourselves, on the ground of our text—*In every man religion should have a history*—a history which runs on from the moment when the child for the first time folded its hands towards heaven, and prattled its “Our Father,” till the last breath, when that same person

cries: "O Son of God, have mercy on me," which runs on indeed into eternity.

And now let us pursue the mysterious stream of man's life hidden in God, to that first fountain point where it so gently flows, that it is already flowing *before man himself observes it*. "God hath made," says the apostle, "of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they *should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being*." See there the mysterious place where the spring of eternity flows into time. When Jehovah breathed into the newly-formed man the breath of life, and said to him: "Thou art My image!" then arose the mystery of human nature, in which, as in a figure, eternity was given in marriage to time. God is nigh to all men, for "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." And the same apostle, in speaking of the heathen, declares that they are a law unto themselves, having a law written in their hearts, so that they are left without excuse. And St. John that there is a light which "lighteth every man coming into the world." Now, to live in this light, in this truth, to us divinely native, is the *hidden life*, it is the life hidden *in God*; for no other one than God, out of whom it flows forth, knows its hidden rising waves. It is *in Him* there is life. Shall I now raise the veil from your breast? Shall I point out to you the beginnings of that life in God which have not yet been understood even by yourselves? Let me then, first, direct you to those moments which have been wanting in, perhaps, the life of none of you, when you longed after something which the whole world could not offer you. For if beyond the world there is no other good than God, your soul has longed at that time after God—then has been the commencement of that life hidden

in God. Oh that man, at such moments, only understood himself! Oh that there were a loving friendly word to interpret that mysterious divine utterance, for to how many does God speak without them imagining that it is so? Let me point out to you the divine call in the moments which are well known to all of you. A solemn starry heaven, the heights of the lofty mountains, a still summer morning, with the distant call of the bell which summons to devotion—where is there a heart, however deeply sunk in the world, in which now and then these things have not caused a longing wish to arise, as after an unknown something, a longing sometimes after God, sometimes after a rest which the world cannot give. Although it may not be known even to thyself, thou longedst then really after God. Thou layest thy burning cheeks upon the bosom of thy friend, thou leanest thy weary head on the breast of thy partner, thou lettest all the good things of life pass by thee, and feelest thyself so poor! “God hath formed man for Himself; therefore man’s heart finds no rest till it finds its rest in Him.” In the midst of the noise of society that longing seizes another; the intoxicating music becomes silent to thee for a moment, and everything around and behind thee appears a long dream, and all men dreaming. Oh, woe to thee if thou dost not firmly hold that moment; if thou plungest again into the wave till it dashes over thy head! So commences, as a single flash of light, the hidden life of man. Christ calls these inward flames the *drawings* of the Father, and it depends on this, as to whether this commencement shall have a continuation. God hath drawn near to thee, and it depends thereon as to whether thou wilt now again draw near to Him. (James iv., 8.) Thou dost so—the unknown something after which thou thirstest presses thee; thou seekest the still hour, thou goest to meet it; if, perchance it may discover itself still more closely, and come nearer to thee, thou criest out: “Thou

unknown something after which I stretch out my hands, without knowing Thy name, disclose Thyself to me and give me *rest*!" In the longing desire of thy heart thou stretchest out to the right and to the left;—at last, thy hand lays hold on the New Testament. And now everything becomes otherwise. Thou readest, and the scales fall from thine eyes. Thou knewest not thyself what thy unrest and longing desire properly meant. There thou learnest to perceive that *sin* is that which closed to thee the way to the land of rest, which thou couldst not picture to thyself. On sin thou didst not generally think. Now thou seest this wall of separation. Now thou longest also, but no longer after an unknown something. Now thou knowest what is the matter with thee; thou longest after the *clean heart*, without which no one can see God. And that is the commencement of the *hidden* life, which really has a *progress*. Christian people, we are now at an important period of the kingdom of God, at a time of great and longing desire. Oh, how many hearts, torn with anxious desire, may there be in this congregation! How many still, at the very same time, to whom in this longing one year after another has passed away, and the seeking has not meant to end in finding. *Can* you, dare you, step forth before the congregation of God, ye torn hearts, and give words to your pain, as I hear you complainingly cry out: "Alas, that the hidden life, of which thou speakest in my case, is only torn lightning flashes, after which the night becomes the more frightful, and *morning* seems never to dawn!" Friends! as long as your longing is still after an unknown something, you certainly cannot find it there. That was just the very thing that I said to you. On the fixed word of Scripture it must knit itself; the Deity which, as respects you, had still no name, must in your case secure a form; you must recognise the Holy One, who here says: "Be ye holy, for I am holy!" You must learn from Scripture what is the wall

of separation from the land of rest, and all your prayer must dissolve itself into this one: "O God, *create in me a clean heart!*" *Such a commencement has really a progress.*

It is true, my respected hearers, in this spring time of the kingdom of God in which we live, many trees come out of which it is doubtful whether autumn will ever turn their bloom into fruit. Numerous among men and women, and especially also among you, ye children of science, are those in whom a certain feeling for the unseen world is awakened—a longing after a nameless something; but with this feeling and this longing you have now gone on from one year to another, and the torn stones of the building have not been willing to be formed into a temple of God. That comes from that longing of yours having still no moral and holy character—from its being an undefined hanging after, and soaring towards, a dim and poetic dream. Shall I, in the words of a poet, describe the nature of your longing? "Where shall I seize upon thee, boundless Being? And where upon O ye Breasts? Fountains of all life, on whom heaven and earth hang, to whom the withered heart presses, ye flow, ye press, and do I thus languish in vain?" That is not the voice of one only; it is the voice of many of our race. And as long as the life hidden in God has only this character, there is wanting to it, also, the onward *history of the inner man*. This begins, properly, only at the time when that longing after rest has become a longing after *a clean heart*. Such a longing rambles out, indeed, no longer into the undefined, but closes immediately on the person of the Redeemer; and in that very fact lies the reason that *such a commencement* of the hidden life has also its progress. If that undefined longing has become a longing after a clean heart, all the thoughts go towards the Redeemer as their central point. His holy offering becomes our comfort when conscience brings charges against us; communion with Him

by faith becomes the source of power in the life; His holy spirit and character become our pattern. Therefore is *Christ* called, in the words of the apostle, even the hidden life itself, "when *Christ*, who is *your life*," he says, "shall appear." From the time when this begins, the hidden life consists not merely in singled-out moments—in torn-in-pieces gleams of light—it becomes a connected, progressive course of inward experiences. After the long night the morning breaks in. Whilst formerly the whole course of the outward events of life, separated from thine inner life, passed by thee, now thou carriest to all thy ways and means a reference to the Redeemer; so that that word and that deed of the life of the Christian, which is manifest to the eyes of the world, is connected with an inner word, and an inner deed of the life hid in God. Formerly, immediately after the lightning from heaven had agitated thee, thou couldst again feel at home in the mire of earth; now, a unity comes into thy life. Certainly, there come also times when the connection of this inner life appears to us disturbed, when it appears to us as if it would expire. As the traveller, on a high margin of rocks, hears deep down below, among the stones, the rush of the little brook, so gentle as to be scarcely perceptible, so does the believer, also, at times, hear only feebly that the stream of his inner life flows on—that it no longer stands still. It is the deep saying of our *Luther* that faith, in the regenerated Christian, like the pulse-beat of the blood, does not stand still, even in the night. Over His own work of grace in our soul the Lord holds at times the shadow of His hand, so that we cannot see it, in order that He may prove us, as regards faith, and preserve us in humility. But now, when the desire after the clean heart can no more cease—the man having fully learnt what is really injurious to him—then is the Christian's heart also constantly urged on towards his Lord; for need of redemption can never cease, and for that very

reason also can the inward stream never fully be broken off. Nay, not only does the stream of the hidden life not cease to flow, but it *enlarges*. It is true that faithful Christians have thought differently on this point; but, as it certainly seems to me, we must say that in the cleansing of the Christian from the time when he became a believer, even if interrupted by single cases of standing still, or, perhaps, of completely retrograde steps, still, on the whole, there must be a *progress* to the very end. With every increasing period the lust of the world must become more despicable to us, eternal truth more sacred, God's will easier, thoughts on death more pleasing, so far as we are real Christians. What other meaning, then, has the command of the apostle—continually to grow, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?" Of course, the shadow of the Lord's hand may not only, as I said before, sometimes conceal our inward union with God, but also our growth in it; but those with whom we stand in the closest relationship must be able to perceive, to the praise of God, that on every branch of the tree of our life the golden fruits of righteousness increase; and even if *their* eye should be too weak, the unseen *eye of God* can give us this testimony.

That is the *progress* of the life hidden. It is called "a life hidden *with Christ* in God," which means *as Christ—just as Christ has it*, just as Christ, in His manifestation on earth, remained hidden from the world as to His true nature. Just as the apostle says elsewhere, that we are buried *with Christ*, when he means that *we* are spiritually buried, *as Christ* was bodily. But Christ is to appear. The cross is to have beams of glory that out of it may arise a star, and the crown of thorns is to become a diadem. The Scriptures call this *a revelation of Jesus Christ*. Perhaps, already to the eye of the believer, even the cross has become a throne of glory, and

his eye has seen the crown of thorns surrounded with heavenly splendour; but that majesty has not gone forth visibly before the eyes of all, and *before* the eyes of the world. "As *He* was in the world," says now His disciple, "so are we also in the world." Well, that hidden life of Christians consecrates them kings and priests of mankind—makes them glorious in their inward man; but outwardly, as the apostle says, they bear in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, and die daily. (2 Cor. iv., 10; 1 Cor. xv., 31.) "Therefore," says the disciple whom Jesus loved, "the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not!" Now, when their King shall appear in glory, then shall also their inward glory be manifest, and their adorning and crown shall be for ever. Do you seize upon and comprehend the height and depth of such apostolical teaching? Not from without shall blessedness, adorning, and glory fall into the bosom of the elect of God; not from without shall heaven be born into their breast. Oh, wondrous word! from within shall heaven, together with glory, be revealed and unfolded; and all that still could be called death in them eternally swallowed up. (1 Cor. xv., 54, 55; 2 Cor. v., 4.) That hidden life of God in the believer the apostle has called the *life of Christ in us*, "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear." His life and our life stand in the closest connection, if we are members of His body. If His life shall appear, then shall ours also! If the HEAD becomes glorious, then will His glorification cast its beams upon all His *members*.

But if all the glory on that side is nothing else than the freeing and manifesting of the life hidden in God, which we have already led here, O, how will you be saved who bear in you no hidden stream of the divine life, which, when the fetter of the body has fallen, could pour itself out into the sea of eternity? (John iv., 14.) You see proved, beloved, what I said to you at the commencement of our meditation for

to-day,—*Only he who has here in time led a life hidden with God, can yonder live openly with God in eternity.* Oh, let no one deceive himself! Merely dying conducts no one to heaven. O you, whose tears flow at the graves of those whom ye love, you have nevertheless a right to weep only in case you have been obliged to doubt whether your departed friends carried within them a life in God, which can yonder be revealed with Christ. Still more ought you to have wept to-day if your heart charged you that what *you* could do had not all been done, in order to lay the foundation of a hidden life in them. Ye parents who weep for departed children, do ye endeavour to plant in them that have still *remained* to you, the life hidden in God? Thou friend, who weepest over thy friend who has been taken away from thee, dost thou then base, in the case of the friends that *remain* to thee, thy friendship, upon the life which is hid in God? Ye whose hearts accuse you that you still bear within you no life hid with Christ in God, do you weep then over *yourselves*? Yet how, if now there are also among you weepers who are not in a position to have the certainty that a life hid in God had commenced in their departed ones? You look up to the one who proclaims the divine word, and ask: “And for us, hast thou, then, no comfort at all?” My dear friends, the divine word does not leave you altogether without a gleam of hope. Only that which it proclaims with plain and undoubted clearness did I intend to proclaim to you to-day. Our next subject shall, however, extend as much hope to you, also, as the word of truth provides us with.* And, meantime, may the Holy Spirit create in us all a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit. Amen.

* The discourse referred to will appear in the Second Series.



CHRIST'S SCHOOL OF SUFFERING.

By W. HOFACKER, *Pastor, Stuttgart, Wurtemberg.*

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.”—JAMES i., 2-12.

LUTHER has somewhere made that fine confession, that there were chiefly three things which had introduced him into the depths of true divinity, and which he was, therefore, accustomed to recommend to every one as proved and tried—viz., silent meditation on the Word of God; persevering and ardent prayer, together with the Word of God; and inward and outward attacks on account

of the **Word of God**. It might be difficult to decide which of these **three important interpreters** has aided him more, and has made him more thoroughly acquainted with the "truth as it is in Jesus." One thing is certain, that he was much indebted to each of the three. Only by their harmonious co-operation he received the spiritual knighthood of a doctor of divinity, and of that learning which is of God. Yet we shall not be mistaken if, of Luther's ingenious assertion, we make a wider and more comprehensive application. We can maintain, with full right, that there are chiefly three things which stamp on the Christian the image of the new man, and accompany and confirm his birth of God. On the one hand, it is the quiet spirit of Mary, which likes to sit at the feet of Christ and attentively listens to the words of eternal life which flow out of the mouth of Heavenly Wisdom; on the other, the fervent and ardent spirit of prayer which, leaning on the power of the children of God, diligently approaches the Throne of Grace, and makes there supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks. But with both must be joined the proof in the school of temptation, since faith must be subject to discipline, and must bring the peaceable fruit of patience and hope to the honour of God. Only thus the inward man becomes perfect and prepared to every good work—a vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's use, and chosen for an imperishable glory.

Of these three means of education and formation for the kingdom of God our text only presents the third; but, at the same time, it is that through which the two former receive their full strength and their true consecration. It is trial which must arouse the spirit plunged into earthly concerns, and benumbed by the influence of the world out of the sleep of security, and point him to that Word which leads the foolish to wisdom, the sinner to righteousness. Besides, in many cases, especially in the days of longer outward rest and

carnal ease, the flame of prayer, even on the altar of the regenerated man's heart, would burn out and die away, if trials, returning from time to time, did not carry fresh wood, to stir anew the fire of devotion and blow it into a bright flame.

It is only by struggling that the inward life can become strong: it is only in the storm that the stem of life and godliness can take deeper and firmer roots. Yea, only by trial, everything that the Divine Spirit is working and developing in us receives its true heavenly stamp. The subject for meditation will then be to-day—*The school of suffering to which we are called in Christ, our Lord.*

I. In Germany it is one of the requisites of civil law, that he who wants to become a citizen shall pass through the popular school. They, therefore, speak of a legal school-duty which no one is permitted to shun: and they are right; for it is important to every state that its youth should be so educated and accomplished that it may contain a treasure of wisdom and godliness to be used for the welfare of civil society. The school duty is, therefore, a general and an irremissible one. There is, also, such a duty in the kingdom of God. He who wants to become a citizen of that kingdom must not refuse to enter the school of suffering which the Lord Himself has instituted on earth, and sanctified by His example.

Already, as the natural descendant of Adam, the first sinner—on whose account the earth was cursed, and by whose fall the whole race became involved in the punishment of disobedience—every one has to carry his share of the common misery which weighs on humanity, and cannot avoid it. But what for the natural man is only a constraint laid upon him from without, is, in the case of the Christian, spiritualised and glorified into a deed of voluntary obedience.

For thus the Lord Himself says : "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." And the apostles add, unanimously : "We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." They declare the duty of suffering to be a general law of the Christian life. If, therefore, we look into the roll of the citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we do not find there a single one who had not, in the school of suffering, to resolve heavier or easier tasks, and been obliged to stop longer or shorter there. If we begin with Adam, who saw his Abel weltering in blood, the hand of his first-born stained by fratricide ; or with Abraham, who was obliged to lay on the altar his beloved child, and had, besides, much disaster and danger to encounter ; or with Jacob, who moistened the bloody coat of Joseph with his tears, and had to lament so many other misdeeds of his sons ; if we consider Moses, whom the Bible calls the most tormented of all men ; or David, who, even in his old age, had deeper wounds struck in his heart than ever Saul, with all the fury of his persecution, had been able to strike ; or if we descend into the days of the new covenant, where we meet with St. Paul, who was "accounted as a sheep for the slaughter, and killed all the day long ;" where we perceive St. Stephen, at the head of a long row of martyrs, who "loved not their lives unto the death ;" even if we consider Luther, who, only among serious struggles and dangers accomplished his Christian course ; or the noble Arndt, whom his falsely orthodox contemporaries covered with disgrace and persecution ; in short, wherever we turn over the leaves of the history of the kingdom of God, either in ancient or modern times, we meet with none of God's elect who have not passed through Christ's school of suffering, and only after various, often very difficult, trials, have obtained their inheritance in the upper sanctuary.

Those, too, who in heaven stand before the throne of God, clothed with white robes, and palms of victory in their hands, are no others than they who came out of great tribulation, and have in their struggles, overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.

You have, therefore, no right to complain, my dear brother, nor to wax impatient, if the Lord takes you into the school of suffering, and there assigns you your task. You thereby only fulfil an obligation incumbent upon you as a citizen of the kingdom of God. You will not wish to be exempt from what is the lot of every one : there is, at least, no reason why just with you an exception should be made to the rule, and a particular and more convenient course of instruction and education should be found out for you. Nay, you, too, are called to “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ;” and by accepting submissively and obediently that part of suffering which has been measured out for you, you have to show that you are a member of the body whose head is Christ, who, by the way of suffering, entered into glory. Yea, it is an honour for you to belong to a school through which have passed the prophets and the apostles themselves, and out of which are come the first-fruits of the creatures of God ; you are to be incorporated into an order, in the ranks of which the most anointed and praiseworthy servants of God have fought, and which has given the highest and noblest jewels to the kingdom of glory. And this is, also, the aim of the Lord with you, by virtue of the thoughts of peace which He thinks towards all men, and which, also, with you He can only attain by the way of suffering.

“ Did I meet no trials here,
No correction by the way,
Might I not with reason fear,
I should prove a cast-away ?

Worldlings may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly, vain delight ;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not, if he might."

II. The peculiarity of each school arises out of the fixed aim tried to be attained with the pupils, and for which, therefore, all school arrangements are calculated. Thus, the burgher-school wants to form able burghers ; the practical school, clever tradesmen ; the military school, gallant soldiers ; the college, intelligent servants of the state and of the church. According to the end contemplated so is the subject of teaching, and the manner to impart it to the pupils calculated and prescribed. In a similar manner, Christ's school of suffering pursues a fixed aim. He wants to form His pupils into able, thoroughly-qualified men ; in short, He wants to make nothing less of them than princes and priests in the kingdom of the immortal God.

"Whose is this image and superscription?" thus the Lord asked once, holding the tribute-penny in His hand—pointing to the emperor's likeness which was stamped on the money. "Whose is this image and superscription?" Thus every one is asked who wants to enter into the heavenly mansions of peace. He who wishes to be found approved and worthy of reception, must be able to show a divine stamp in God's image, after the likeness of the King who was made perfect by the sufferings of death ; and only after the deepest humiliation, and, having "made Himself of no reputation," has been crowned with glory and honour. In all the trials of faith and patience which the Lord lays on His people, He, the great Educator of spirits, has, therefore, no other aim in view but that the brightness of His face be reflected in them ; that He be formed in them ; and that by the quickening Spirit in the refining furnace of affliction, His image be stamped on

them without fault and without spot. His patience and His obedience, His meekness and His humility, His firm faith and His persevering hope, His victorious fight and His glorious perfection, are to be reflected in the trial of their sufferings, so that He may be able to behold in them the true followers of His spirit, and sharers of His glorious life.

From this point of view the apostles considered their sufferings, and by this the sharpest sting of them was broken, and the bitterest cup was wonderfully sweetened. "We always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," they exclaim; but they add, full of confident hope, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." Therefore, they gloried in their tribulations, and rejoiced when they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus's sake. And thus St. James, in our text, is, as it were, intoning a song in a higher strain, when he exclaims, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

We are sorry to perceive that this apostolical apprehension of sufferings has become so rare among us, and that, when it is the question to enter into Christ's school of suffering, and to solve its various problems, the high and praiseworthy end for which we suffer is ordinarily so covered and veiled before our short-sighted eyes. How much ill-humour and carnal resistance, how much gloominess and impatient murmuring, how many mistakes and vain attempts to help ourselves, might be cut off and struck down by that one thought: "This rough and thorny path, which thou art led, is just the right way for thy true and eternal glorification; even this affliction, how heavily it may weigh on thee, and how hidden its design may

yet be for thee, must really contribute to glorify thee into the resemblance of Christ, and to create thee in His image." If faith can only lay hold on that thought, the burden of suffering is thereby diminished, and we are able to say, with St. Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." For

" At last God's servants ceaseless joy shall reap,
Who, bearing precious seed, go forth and weep ;
If they 'midst suffering faithful here abide,
They shall with Jesus there be glorified.
My soul ; tho' here by various trials prov'd,
Believe that by thy Saviour thou art lov'd :
Submit thy will to His ; with patience wait ;
He soon to perfect bliss will thee translate."

III. But, besides the aim of the school, there must, in each well-regulated establishment, also exist a fixed plan after which to proceed. If there is to be order, solidity, and proportionate progress in the studies of the pupils, a well-pondered plan must not be wanting, by which is determined in what gradation the various branches are to be imparted, and what method of teaching must be observed. For the spiritual faculties and abilities of the pupil must not be exerted too much—his capacity and his age must always be carefully regarded. Yea, even in that, the wisdom of a teacher shows itself in the most splendid way, when he knows how to lead the pupil onward from degree to degree, and, without making leaps with him or leaving behind gaps, is able, with a secure and firm hand, to lead him to the set aim.

For Christ's school of suffering too, there is a fixed plan according to which the pupils are treated. It is in good hands, for it has been made by Him who gives term and measure to each thing, and always remembers that we are dust and ashes. But the application and execution of it has been confided to the merciful High Priest, "who was tempted in all points like as we are, and who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Oh, how able is He to distribute skilfully the various tasks in the school of suffering, and, whether they are to be easier or heavier, to weigh them with perfect wisdom, according to the measure of strength and the spiritual age of His pupils! It is true that, if we consider the matter superficially and externally, it oftens appears as if a blind chance was reigning in this distribution. In hundreds of cases we cannot find a reason or give an account to ourselves why one disciple of the Lord has just to bear this, and another that, task; but where we are permitted to look deeper into the mystery of the plan of education which He pursues with His redeemed, there we find that the most adorable wisdom has been presiding, and that the Lord has allotted to every one what is the most fitting for him according to his individuality, his degree of faith and knowledge, and which, considering the corruption of his nature, will most securely procure the purification which he needs to his preparation for the heavenly inheritance. It is, therefore, from a gross misapprehension that we often hear the suffering and the afflicted impatiently ask, 'Why is this for me? Why, just this very suffering, this loss, this affliction, while others are exempt from it, and while their sufferings would have been for me, according to my individuality, much lighter and much easier to be borne?' O thou fool, and slow of heart to believe what the mouth of the Lord, without whose will not a hair of thy head perishes, has so often and in so manifold ways testified to thee! This very suffering which is so unseasonable for thee, this very loss which

grieves thee so much, is calculated for none else but thee, and is appointed for thee by the faithful hand of thy divine Teacher. He knows thee, and understands from what side He must lay hold of thee ; He is the true Physician, who uses with each of His sick people a different, but certainly the right, remedy, and will never be deprived of the glory which at the last He has always acquired : namely, that He has considered and done everything well and led a good matter, though on a crooked, yet a straight way, to a good end.

Be, therefore, of good cheer, even when the waters of affliction overflow their banks, and the billows of temptation roll against thy house. Should even the foundation of thy faith shake, should even the beams of thy confidence crack, yea, shouldst thou be obliged to fly further up into the superior regions of hope below the open sky, where, solitary and deserted, thou spreadest out thy arms and yet it seems as if none were able to help thee,—He who is able to say, “ Thus far shalt thou go and no farther ; and here thy proud waves must subside ! ”—He, from all eternity, has calculated how high the temptation and anguish of thy soul shall rise, without shattering into pieces the building of thy faith, or overthrowing the foundation of it. As soon as the height fixed by Him is reached, the waters will fall again, the storm will abate, thou wilt again perceive the dry land, and thy soul will be permitted to thank the Lord on her harp, that He has been the help of thy countenance and thy God. Therefore,

“ Steadfast in faith to Jesus cleave,
His faithfulness review,
And every burden with Him leave,
Whose love is daily new :
His ways with thee are just and right,
He puts thy enemies to flight,
However threat'ning they appear :
Take courage, therefore, He is near.”

IV. The variety of the pupils, according to their age and their degrees of cultivation, establishes in every school various classes and divisions of it, with the arrangement that they advance from the lower to the higher, and thus progressively run through them all. The same arrangement we meet with in the—our Lord's—school of suffering. Already the variety of suffering establishes a great difference among the pupils; one has an easier, the other a heavier, burden: one finds his task in his own house and family life, the other in his office and earthly calling; there are temptations from without for some, and temptations from within for others, and the latter are commonly by far the heavier. An enlightened doctor of our national Church says somewhere, that in Christ's school of suffering there are ordinarily four divisions among the pupils. In the lowest all say, *I must suffer*. Suffering is for them an oppressive "shall," a heavy burden, a constraint; with this class Christians begin ordinarily in the school of suffering, and, though some may try to overleap it, before they are aware of it, they are in it. But if in that class we submit quietly to the Divine Spirit, we advance into the second, where the motto is, *I will suffer*. Here we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God: often amidst heavy struggles the resolution is taken to take up our cross and to carry it after the Lord, and, with resignation, to rest in His will. By so doing we easily advance into the third class, where the motto is, *I am able to suffer*. The strength of Christ, which is made perfect in weakness, becomes the staff of the weary and the power of the powerless, and out of His fulness the sufferer is now permitted to draw day by day all things that pertain unto life and godliness, and arm the inward man with patience and confidence to keep the faith in the struggle to the end. But if we advance into the highest class, in which the apostles and prophets have taken their seats, the motto is, *I am privileged to suffer*. Here we consider tribulation as a privilege of the

children of God, for which, as for other gifts of His grace and truth, they thank Him in filial simplicity, and praise His holy name. Arrived in that class, Christians sing :

“Floods of tribulation heighten,
Billows still around me roar,
Those that know not Christ, they frighten,
But *my soul* defies their power :
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Hallelujah, praise the Lord.”

This division into classes is very true and very instructive, only it would be an error to believe that the pupils are regularly and uninterruptedly, from degree to degree, always advancing higher, till, in the uppermost class, they enjoy rest and quietude. Alas! it is not so. Though they be sometimes advanced to the second, third—yea, even fourth degree, swift as an arrow they often are thrown back into the lowest, where they have to begin anew with the “*I must suffer*,” and, perhaps with much inward struggle and reluctance rise from the impatience and stubbornness of their heart and climb labouriously the way of patience and faith, and glorying in tribulation. Therefore, the apostle St. James gives, in our text, a sure staff into the hands of the suffering, with the help of which they can go forward and, though on a rough and narrow way, climb up to the heavenly heights. It is the staff of prayer. “If any one of you lack wisdom,” he says, viz., the wisdom to suffer, “let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” How often soever you may come and ask Him to grant you new strength, to spare you again, to give you fresh proofs of His help, He does not upbraid you concerning that which you have already received; He gives liberally, with the same mercy and simplicity with which He has already the first time turned

towards you the countenance of His favour, and has so often glorified in you His wonderful faithfulness. Therefore, rejoice that in each degree you are equally near to Him, and His heart and His hand are always open to those who call upon Him, who call upon Him faithfully.

“ Is God my strong salvation,
No suffering I fear :
He hears my supplication,
Dispelling all my care :
If He, my Head and Master,
Support me from above,
What pain or what disaster
Can part me from His love ? ”

V. But, if in a school the pupils are to be animated by a cheerful and fresh spirit, encouragements and joys must not be wanting, by which the labour of learning is seasoned, and application is raised and preserved. Already the habit of studying together, with other companions of the same age, is attractive and profitable. Besides, for an obedient pupil, there is a kind look ; and an encouraging word of the teacher is a great spur to advance in the path of learning and of good behaviour. And the holidays, interrupting the life of the school for a longer or shorter time, greatly contribute to refresh the inclination to learn again, and the pupils return with a fresh zeal to their appointed day-work.

Such encouragements and particular joys are, also, not wanting in Christ's school of suffering. Already the observation that we are not standing alone, but that we have brethren and sisters at our side who have not only themselves passed through various trials of patience and of faith, but who, also, in the spirit, bear and suffer with us, hope and pray with us, is a great gain and a great blessing. If you belong to the light-minded of the

world, "which lieth in wickedness," humiliations of every kind will surely occur, notwithstanding your exertions and your opposition. And even if you should try to banish the deadly bitterness of suffering, after the fashion of this world, you must still drink the sour dregs of the cup, on the upper brim of which you have, perhaps, tasted long enough the sweetness of earthly pleasure. But then the world reveals herself as what she is—a faithless friend, a treacherous liar. She has no ear for your complaints; heartless, she turns away from you and says, "See thou to that!" She forsakes you as soon as she can no longer use you for her ends. You will find it otherwise, when you have entered into the school of Christ, and have taken your seat among companions who are, indeed, pressed more or less down by the cross of Christ, but who, at the same time, bear His spirit within themselves. There you will meet brethren and sisters who, in the hour of affliction, will assist you with consolation, advice, and help, share your cares, make your affliction theirs, and accomplish the apostle's saying: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

But not only directly through their hand: indirectly the Lord Himself will take care of those "that labour and are heavy laden," just as a loving mother shows especial care to her sick children, and soothes and comforts them because they want it most. Oh, how bright appears His gracious face in many a dark room of suffering—streaming forth wonderful rays of glorification! I know a well-tried disciple of the Saviour, who, tormented by nameless pain, languishing day and night, as if stretched on the rack, was yet overflowed with such a stream of peace, that he—sitting in spirit already in heavenly places—could ask the Lord to lay upon him ten times more pain and suffering, if He would only not allow the abundant source of inward consolation sprung up in his heart, ever to dry up. Oh, the Lord knows how to

comfort, even as a mother, and to pour a balm of life upon the weary head—

“ That soul and body must rejoice,
Unite to praise and thank Him.”

Yea,

“ He, the Saviour, is a gracious Lord ;
Ever faithful, keeping to His word :
None can be so full of grief,
But he soon may find relief
By the comfort His kind looks afford.”

He, the All-wise, knows when to give true hours of rest, and, after the days of anguish and of struggle, to cause seasons of refreshment to begin again. When the storms and tempests have passed away, when the over-clouded sky has cleared up, He makes the sun of better days again shine over the heads of His suffering people, so that they are able exultingly to exclaim: “ The Lord killeth and maketh alive ; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.”

Such blessed experiences of His supporting power and grace they value then so highly that for nothing in the world would they part with them ; they resemble the precious pearls found in the shells which sometimes the stormy sea throws on the shore. The faithful sufferer finds rich compensation for all the privations and tears which the calamities and difficulties of life have pressed out of him. Yea, he can testify with St. Paul: “ As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.”

“ His Spirit cheers my spirit,
With many a precious word,
That I shall joy inherit,
By trusting in the Lord ;
Since, after tribulation,
All those who Jesus love,
Have that blest expectation,
To live with Him above.”

VI. But there is yet one thing behind. In every school there are held examinations from time to time, by which the progress of the pupils is measured, and, according to the result, prizes and rewards are distributed among those who are worthy of praise and of distinction. In Christ's school of suffering, also, the pupils look forward to a great and general examination, which He, their Master, the just Judge of all flesh, will hold. Then the words of our text will be realised: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

Do ye hear what the mouth of the Lord promises? It is the question of crowns for those who have been found tried; of kingdoms and thrones, which, in bleeding and dying, Christ has procured for His people, and as the Lord of glory has prepared in His Father's dominions. Those who overcome and become perfect shall reign with Christ, and sit with Him on His throne, even as He sits with His Father on His throne. For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

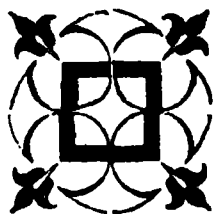
Such palms are beckoning to those "who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for life eternal," and they are set before our faith and our hope, not that man's vain heart, in proud self-conceit and pharisaical self-contentment, may snatch them as a lawfully-acquired and well-deserved reward, but that "the feeble knees and the hands which hang down" of those who, in the wilderness of this world, look towards the heavenly Canaan, may be strengthened, and their sunken courage cheered by the exceedingly glorious and gracious promises. That the weary pilgrims, who feel home-sick after the unchangeable Fatherland, and poor in themselves, and hungry and thirsty after the righteousness of God, may

go on their way, and lift up their eye of faith to the mansions of eternal freedom :

“ When the sufferings of this time
Will be chang'd to endless joy.”

“ There we, to all eternity,
Shall join the angelic lays,
And sing in perfect harmony
To God our Saviour's praise :
He hath redeem'd us by His blood,
And made us kings and priests to God.
For us, for us the Lamb was slain :
Praise ye the Lord.”

Here, my beloved, ye have a picture, though drawn in general outlines, of the school of suffering to which we are called in Christ our Lord. Many of us have already often visited it ; others will sooner or later enter it. But we all have many and various things to learn in it—what no man can tell the other, what only the Spirit from above can reveal to us. Blessed are we, when we have usefully employed the time passed in that school, and gathered a treasure of imperishable knowledge in it. Then, when the Lord leads us out of its rooms, often so damp, we shall enter the Father-house of the great God with the psalm of praise on our lips :
“ Thank God ! we have reached our Home.” Amen.





THE LOVE OF THE PARDONED MAN.

By DR. C. A. TOREN, *Pastor and Professor, Upsala.*

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.”—LUKE vi., 36-42.

“**UT** on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.”

These moving words St. Paul writes to the believers at Colosse. Having himself become, from an enemy of the cross of Christ and a persecutor of His disciples, a member of the glorious Church, which has no spot or wrinkle, he is penetrated by the sweet and mighty ardour of love. He too well knew, from his own experience, the temper of the regenerated, and the substance, as well as the fruit, of true faith,

not to exercise himself continually, like the other disciples of the Lord, in this kingly law of charity. He felt too deeply in his mind the new commandment, he felt too warmly in his heart the Christian's holy calling to mutual love and forbearance, not to charge them very often to perform this heavenly duty of kindness and charity. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."

And who of you, ye true confessors of Jesus Christ, who, like the apostle, have tasted the sweetness, the particular joy which pervades a forgiven soul, but have felt strongly compelled to love your fellow Christians? Who is among ye upon whom the grace of Christ has exercised its blessed effect, without his experiencing within himself a new desire to love others, to bear with them, and to render them happy? Who, when once the sweet message of the Saviour had not only reached his ear, but also deeply penetrated his heart, did not find an irresistible impulse to show charity to his fellow-man? Who, when a ray of the glory of heaven was sinking so softly, so clearly, so kindly into his mind, hitherto so gloomy, so dark, so grieved, did not feel inclined to pardon every offence, however grievous—every fault, however great, of others? Who, in his gratitude for the heavenly gift of grace, did not feel prompted willingly to give whatever it might be, his all—yea, his life—out of tenderness for his brethren? What a new importance had men for you, when, from this time, in these many creatures who hitherto had been strangers and indifferent to you, ye have learnt to perceive beings who, though unhappy by nature and birth, yet are created for an unspeakable joy and glory; beings who, redeemed by the Son, are called to faith, and, by faith, to eternal life in the blessedness of heaven—a boundless blessedness and happiness

Yea, grace from God, and love and charity towards men

cannot be separated ! Kindness is the new nature of the pardoned man. He lives for men, he tenderly cares for men ; in the welfare of men he finds, next to the most excellent joy, the joy in God, his greatest joy. Grant us, O God, this holy inclination ! For it is Thy gift. Create in us this new mind ; draw us all to Thee, O God of love ! May we all obtain mercy, and thus become united in the unity of the Spirit, and in the bond of peace. Hear us, for Thy love's sake. Amen.

The words of our text—in which He who is Love Himself, teaches us how we, to be the true children of the Sovereign Father and to remain such, in whom will be accomplished the greatest and most blessed promises, must be minded and behave towards each other—justify us in taking for the subject of to-day's meditation :

THE LOVE OF THE PARDONED MAN.

By nature we are all inclined to turn everyone to his own way ; we like best to follow our own egotistical inspirations, without having regard to the injury which thereby, in some way or other, we cause to others. There is in our poor, deeply sinful nature, a feature which yields the strongest testimony to our awful fall and ruin ; there is in us, in so far as we are still unconverted, an inclination to misinterpret the words, the actions, and the enterprises of others—an inclination to judge harshly and maliciously—a propensity, at the slightest offence, to seek at once satisfaction and revenge, and to consider ourselves as entirely absolved from the duty, which otherwise is the dearest, the sweetest, and most blessed to a child of God. Great and deeply rooted is self-love in the fallen man, and its power is so much the greater and the more dangerous because it so easily transforms itself into the shape of an angel of God, and, with many deceitful plausible reasons, seeks to gloss over and to hide itself, and succeeds but too

well. Our rash and short-sighted judgment is the rule by which all men are to be appraised and tested, and woe to him who does not stand the trial ! He becomes at once the subject of our contempt : woe to him who displeases us or offends us in any way ; his name is as good as lost. Then he is judged without restraint, without moderation ; then we forget the many infirmities and faults which we have and commit ourselves ; then we forget that if the Holy and Just One, who knows everything, even what men's looks will never discover, were to act with the same severity, strictness, and rashness, we should be lost without recovery. But when the Spirit of the Lord enlightens the man deeply sunk into sin, when the sword of the judging Word strikes and penetrates the transgressor himself, when the dark night is illuminated as if by a flash of lightning, and to the hitherto secure sinner, his danger is suddenly shown, in that hour—the painful but blessed hour of contrition—how is then his high-flown courage broken, how softens and bleeds his formerly hard and proud heart ! Memorable moment, when the man at last perceives that he is in want of something which cannot be compensated for on earth. Blessed moment, when the scales begin to fall, when the ice begins to melt, when the true Sun shines forth, but yet only to show that in us—that is, in our flesh—dwells no good thing, and that, truly, we are very much alienated from the life which is of God. Holy moment when, with amazement, we perceive that we have forsaken the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewn us out cisterns—broken cisterns—that can hold no water. I call thee blessed, dear hearer, if thy state is only that of the first illumination ; I call thee blessed, whoever thou mayest be, though thou art still missing the abiding consolation, if thou thinkest a voice within thee calls thy afflicted soul to the communion of grace, to reconciliation with God ! Now thou wilt not be inclined to look without sympathy on another fellow-creature, or to treat him unmercifully when he

calls upon thee for help, or to laugh at an absent man and sully his claim to regard ; now thou dost no more feel prone to harbour against him who has wronged thee the debasing feeling of revenge ; now thou dost not wish to censure severely this or that man, whose equal thou art in every respect—yea, even in culpability.

But how does he feel, who, in the matter of the salvation of his soul, is not satisfied with having been awakened and called by the Spirit of God, but has already followed and obeyed that calling? He is not content merely to hear the incomparable voices which from heaven sound into men's ears ; he has stood still in his course—he has fallen down before God and has implored His grace. He has not only seen the danger to which sin reduces us, but even, in his great misery, has dimly perceived the Hero who has bruised the serpent's head, the Lamb who has taken away the sins of the world. He has heard Jesus say : “ Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It may be that his anguish was great before the hour came when he was led by the Spirit of God to the throne of grace, but so much the greater is now also his rest. There, at the foot of the cross, where he is weeping over his grievous sins, now become too heavy to be borne, and where, like Jacob, he is wrestling with the Lord in prayer, and saying : “ I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me ! ” What comforts are not streaming on his sorrowing heart ! How does not the repentant, when alone with his God, listen to those voices which henceforth not only speak of sin and punishment, of judgment and retribution, but of grace and pardon, of reconciliation and life. Where is there in the whole world a voice so cheering or so comforting as the sweet promise of a full pardon of all sins ? When a man has heard this promise, and received it in faith, by what a deep, still joy, is he then not filled ! The clouds of dark remembrance, which not long ago covered

his eyes as with a veil, are gone, and the sun is shining softly over the tender and new-born flowers in the softened ground of his heart. The Sun, the eternal Sun of Righteousness, with salvation under His wings, has risen above it. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new!" He feels a new vigour within himself; new powers, which he never experienced before, are roused in his heart; new thoughts and sentiments, the grace, as well as the strength of which give witness of a heavenly origin. Formerly he was bent by grief, formerly he murmured against his sufferings and afflictions, now he feels quite independent of all that comes from the external world; he is so satisfied, so peaceful, so happy, that he has a great mind to press the whole human race to his bosom. The lust of sin has fallen before the breath of the Lord Jesus Christ; but, at the same time, there fell also into the justified heart a spark of the holy, all-powerful fire of heavenly love—of that fire, for the kindling of which Jesus told us that He had been sent into the world. Henceforth he, the pardoned man, does no longer find it difficult to follow the commandment of his Heavenly Master, but, with the loving John, he joyfully confesses, "His commandments are not grievous." Now he thinks of Him to whom he owes his present happiness; he is mindful of the sweet lot, of the blessed hope which He prepares for him, and compares it with what he formerly was—he, the forsaken man, who restlessly sighed in sin's fetters. Oh, he thinks, how shall I ever be able to reward the Lord for the good which He has done me! And the Lord answers: "What is done unto one of the least of My brethren, is done unto Me." Now he is merciful, this converted man, having experienced himself how his heavenly Father is merciful. To him, as to Mary Magdalen, many sins are forgiven; therefore, he also loves much. Now, if there be anybody who deceives him by words or actions, he is

mindful of his own faults, and considers all the evil which may befall him as well deserved. Where should I be, thinks he, if the Lord had proceeded against me with rigour, if he had not shown mercy? What would have become of me if the Lord had not pitied me, the guilty, rebellious servant? Should I then not now pity my fellow-servant; as the Lord pities me? I have obtained mercy! Since now I only live upon the grace of my dear Lord, how should I be rude, or even hard against my brother? Since I so often experience how good He is—this Lord, into whose house I have been received, in whose bosom I rest, to whose glory I draw nearer with each step—how should I, being myself so unworthy, and yet having been so highly favoured and rendered so happy, be angry with my brother? Should I not, on the contrary, incessantly labour for his true welfare, pray fervently for him, and thus try to win him? This compassionate sympathy, this mercy, is the air in which the pardoned man lives, or, at least, wishes to live. He is, indeed, drawn thither by an irresistible impulse, and he can enjoy no serenity when he is not permitted to breathe in it. It is his heartfelt joy, without caring for gain or honour, to serve those and to prepare joys for those who, though much weakness is still besetting them, are called to the same end, and to whom the same salvation is destined. Still more, according to the commandment of the Lord Jesus in our text, the pardoned man carefully bewares of judging. Formerly always ready to judge his fellow-men rigorously and bitterly, to misinterpret their motives and their actions; formerly revelling in slander, sometimes, perhaps, without participating in it with one word,—he has now become mild, delicate, lowly in heart; yea, he is indulgent, affable, and even quick to feel an injury done to others. Hitherto too inclined to attribute low or wrong motives to others, he now tries to give to everything the best interpretation. He now comprehends and takes to heart the purpose of the Lord's

question in our text: "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Humbled in the school of grace, he has learnt there to know, by the Spirit of truth, his own inability, his own sinful misery, yea, his own blindness, and, therefore he does not presume uncharitably to scold, to censure, to condemn, as if he himself were infallible and perfect. The pardoned man follows the commandment of our Saviour, to cast out first the beam out of his own eye, before he undertakes to pull out the mote that is in his brother's eye. In the mighty strength of the grace of God he endeavours, in daily repentance and renewing, to amend the defects and faults which are still adhering to himself, and it is only in that spirit of self-humiliation, of self-denial and sanctification, that he dares to occupy himself with the improvement and reformation of others. O my dear hearers, this work requires a heart struck and broken by God's hand. But mark it well, it is the self-complacent, egotistical, and proud judging of others which Jesus condemns here; not the tender reproving of parents, teachers, or friends in the Lord; not the humble, well-meaning, sincere zeal for the conversion and spiritual welfare of others; on the contrary, this zeal is considered as the best blossom of the tree of love by God and His holy angels. The judging against which Jesus warns, is clearly the hard, malignant, self-complacent censure, coming from the lips of such men who, with an uncircumcised heart, are continually living in sins against which they do not wrestle, and over which they do not weep. It is true, that the pardoned man can, yea, he must, be a witness for the truth; he must be zealously affected for good things—he must reprove the erring; but through his zeal against sin shines hearty compassion and love for the sinner himself. For the carnal man there is scarcely anything so difficult as to pardon from the whole heart, but a friend of the CRUCIFIED finds it is quite easy. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven!" The

act of forgiving is for the believer an enjoyment, a feast, a festival. When a child has done wrong, but in the moment of his repentance has been pardoned by his good father, does there not then exist the most tender relation between the failing child and the forgiving father? But this is not all. If the child has really and heartily sought that forgiveness, and has deeply received it into his heart, how good and friendly will he then be to his brothers and sisters! Is it not as if the bonds of the family had been tied faster, and is not this child, on his part, henceforward more inclined to forgive those who are faulty? The same kindness and indulgence is produced—the same thing happens—though in an infinitely richer and more powerful measure—when man feels that, by faith in Jesus Christ, he has found grace with God. And lastly, a pardoned Christian knows, too, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; therefore he welcomes nothing more than an opportunity of giving, or an occasion of doing good. The invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Give, and it shall be given unto you,” is for him a pleasing, a sweet admonition. If the Lord has granted him earthly goods, how happy is he, if, from his abundance, he is permitted “to give to him that needeth!” He is not satisfied with waiting for those who want his help; he seeks them out, he goes about, he does good, and helps. He thinks of the poor, he devises the best means really to help. If his outward circumstances are not so considerable, he yet continually and strictly obeys the exhortation of the apostle: “Distribute to the necessity of saints!” Even then he breaks his bread to the hungry, convinced that the same God who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, will not permit His child to suffer want. And while he holds fast the glorious and blessed promises of the Lord, he scarcely perceives what, in an external respect, he misses in this vale of misery! he does not perceive it on account of the

abundance of grace which enlightens his way, on account of the precious treasure which is laid up for him in heaven. But he does not only give of his external goods ; he, also, willingly, consecrates to his fellow-men his spiritual as well as his bodily powers. The unpardoned man works with selfish thoughts bent on his own reward, asking continually, "What shall I have therefore?" The pardoned man, on the contrary, works out of love and in love ; he is willing and ready to fight and to wrestle for the welfare of others—he is prepared to give his life for the brethren, and he joyfully does it when the moment has come. Trouble does not frighten him ; he is neither afraid of exertions nor sacrifices. Whether he may possess rich means and enjoy great confidence, or his life be more hidden and his circumstances poor and needy, yet the same holy inclination to give is continually stirred up within him, and in his heart sounds sweetly the promise of his Almighty Lord : "Give, and it shall be given to you !" The rich, as well as the poor, those who enjoy great consideration as well as those who lead an humble and a secluded life, as soon as they have been pardoned, as soon as they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, as soon as they have received grace before God, and have begun to live upon this grace, they become equal to each other in power ; they become similar to each other. Their purse, as well as their hand, is opened ; they become charitable. It is here a question of a fundamental law in the kingdom of grace : all the children of God are loving—all are charitable. The pardoned man enjoys rest in his conscience, and, therefore, possesses the highest wishes sufficient for kings as well as for daily toilers—he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; but in this very peace there is stirring a sweet inquietness—he *must* give, he *must* be charitable, he *must* let others share the good things which he

has received of the Lord. The leaven will leaven the whole lump—the kingdom of God will spread itself. He has freely received, he freely gives. He keeps nothing for himself alone. What he possesses, he possesses for others. Only one thing he possesses for himself, that is to say, the quiet, the hidden intercourse with the Lord. From time to time he withdraws into retirement, happy after the hardships he has undergone, happy and joyful in God, his Saviour; happy in the possession of the grace of God, and of a peace which passes all understanding. A quiet sabbath surrounds his dwelling, be it magnificent or poor, but especially on the evening of the sixth day; a foretaste of the rest of the blessed spreads its wings over the pardoned man. Then he looks upward, and sheds, perhaps, tears of joy, through his deep sense of the favour and goodness of God. Then he is mindful of the mysterious words of his Master: “Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Then he bends in secret the knee of his heart before his Saviour, and looks with gratitude, yea, even with rapture, towards the heavenly heritage, the great and gracious reward, which is stretched out towards him from above, by the calling of God in Christ.

Having now endeavoured, led by the words of Jesus in our text, and relying on them, to collect the traits of the temper and the heart of the pardoned man, we do not wish to maintain that all this, in its completeness, is found in every true Christian. No, no! that would be speaking against every spiritual experience, which very often testifies to the imperfection in the walk of love, which always gives much sorrow to true believers. But yet it is certain, that if the divine order takes its due course, this working in love is soon perceptible in the pardoned man, yea, there is no doubt that he strives, with all his soul, to fulfil God’s demands in this

respect. And the Lord is not wanting, on His part, and grants His people the power to follow His exhortations more and more. The Lord Jesus gives what He commands. Put on, therefore, O ye children and friends of God, put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering! In this blessed attire go forth, and meet confidently every thing which may approach you, be it disgrace or approbation, love or hatred, benefits or abuse, with the same mild, loving, forbearing, merciful spirit! Be thankful, when your fellow-men show you kindness—the finest rose which earth has to offer! But if the contrary befall you, then exercise yourselves in the heavenly virtue of patience; suffer with meekness, and rely on the final victory of love. “Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.” Probably he will awake at last, and seek for the source of thine uncommon conduct. And thou art blessed, if thou hast given him cause to seek and to find eternal life. There are such examples to be met with, and they would occur oftener if we Christians, who “rejoice in hope of the glory of God,” would show in all our conduct a warmer and more tender, and at the same time, a more powerful Christianity. How many a hard, proud, impenitent man might thus be won for the kingdom of God! How should people not join those whose life would thus bear the stamp of love and of heavenly rest! O ye Christians, be not forgetful of your glorious calling, to be the priests of God and of Jesus Christ, and that thereby ye are bound, each in his sphere, by intercession, charity, and a holy example, to win souls for heaven. Ye believing parents, do not forget it, ye pastors and teachers, do not forget it, ye servants, do not forget it! Thou Israel

of God, thou little flock of those who believe in Jesus as their Saviour and Redeemer, do thou, also, not forget it!

My dear hearers! Love is the word which incessantly issues from the mouth of the merciful God—He longs, He delights to manifest it towards each of you who desires to return to His gracious bosom: salvation is the portion which He would rejoice to grant to each of you! And should we suffer hatred, unkindness, hardness, discord, contempt, to dwell in our heart? Oh no, let us not fall out by the way towards our common fatherland! Till the flame of heavenly love burns among men, till they learn to love, bless, pardon, and pray for each other, they have no share in the heritage of the saints in light. “Charity suffereth long; and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things.” If you possess the ardent inclination, the powerfully attracting impulse towards your fellow-men, then everything is going on well with you; this is an infallible sign; “for” by that “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” In Christ Jesus nothing is of value but faith, which worketh by love. Love is, be it well understood, the spontaneous fruit of faith. As the rose exhales a fragrant odour, so must also the soul, who has been united with Jesus, the true “Rose of Sharon,” glow in holy, pure, and active love. Could you live in daily prayer, be occupied with heavenly subjects, and, at the same time, look at a brother or sister without benevolence, without a prayer breathed for their happiness, without compassion, and without love? No; if you are deficient in love, you are also deficient in faith. If you have not a genuine love, you cannot have a true faith; if you do not love, you do not believe. And if you do not

believe, if you are not a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, if you cannot glory in your being pardoned, what shall then comfort you against affliction, and sorrow, and distress? What does comfort you when you think of your sins, what against the external enemy, the threatening attack of death? Then you may well exclaim, with that old blind man, "What joy can I have, who must sit in the dark, and cannot see the light of heaven?"

But let him who feels that he has not yet obtained, seek without delay, for it is still not too late for any one of you. Let him who has lost his faith in the only begotten Son of God, and who has made shipwreck, return to Him who has life, and life abundantly; to Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He who feels that he has little faith, little love, let him instantly seek for more! If we feel ourselves destitute of these treasures—and who must not in this respect recognise his poverty and weep over it?—let us still not despair. He who is not sure of pardon, and who just on that account is destitute of life, of strength, and energy, let him seek, above all things, to obtain that assurance. We have no intention to praise human goodness and kind-heartedness, nor to draw forth the glistening flowers of love which may sometimes shoot up from the ground of nature, and not without harm; this is a grass which dries up, a flower which fades when the Spirit of the Lord blows on it; it will not be found good by experience; it does not stand the test. It is only grace, when it takes hold of a sinful human soul, penetrates, animates, transforms, and renews it, that produces the true, the imperishable love which is stronger than death, yea, a flame of the Lord. Seek, then, ye dearly-bought souls, seek this grace and the heavenly gift which follows, that is love! Seek grace with your God in the name of Jesus Christ, ask Him to pardon your sins, and to grant you His peace for your conscience! verily, a worthier,

a more important business has never been undertaken by any one born of a woman! Risen from such a prayer and pardoned, you will look around—and oh, with what a look! with what a love! especially towards those who are one day to people with you the mansions where God is all in all, and love is immeasurable! There you will feel yourselves at home, ye who on earth have lived a life of love! There only you will be fully understood, ye glowing souls, ye warmly-beating hearts, ye who, with all your exertions, had not where to lay your heads. There all is shining with love, there everything is breathing a holy love.

O God, thou God of love, of peace, and of power! help us to practise a sincere love among each other, that we may willingly pardon our enemies; have pity upon all sorts of unhappy, and erring, and straying men, and by our testimony, even without words, overcome the obstinate! Gather, through the power of Thy love, souls for Thy kingdom! O grant that Thy glory, notwithstanding our weakness, may be furthered by us. Grant that that first-born of Satan, unbelief, may be removed, and the flames of love, through living faith in Thy Son, may be kindled! The more He is contradicted by some, the more make Him to be known and praised by others, that He may thus become divinely great and altogether lovely! Pour out His love into the hearts of many! Spread out His power! Spread His fragrance! Reveal more and more His grace! Stir the hearts of Thy children that they may continually pray for it! Strengthen, animate, and hear their prayer, their intercession! God, our God, look, O look, down, and assert the right of Thine Anointed on this earth! Amen.



LOSS AND GAIN.

By DR. CLAUS HARMS, *Kiel.*

“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”—
Ps. lxxiii., 25, 26.

WHEN poverty and wretchedness visit us, we are often seized with ill-humour and despondency. We feel then an impulse and longing after the comforting Word of God, the healing balm which the Gospel of Jesus deals out to our wounded hearts.

Many of us have suffered, perhaps, a lengthened period already—have long tarried and hoped for better days, but in vain. Many of us once saw better days, and now mourn over what has been lost. Hear, however, to-day a decision as to the worth of things, and learn therefrom, first, who is to be pitied; then, who is to be still more pitied; and, finally, who is to be pitied most of all. This sermon should give you a scale to enable you to measure to what extent you have fallen into misfortune. May it lead to all of us becoming possessed of something better than we have ever lost! Hear the words of Scripture: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” (Ps. lxxiii., 25, 26.)

Does the pious Asaph value *nothing* else? Does he ask for *nothing* else? May his words win for me your sympathy, so that you may form your own judgment, and be led to the comforting and powerful conviction that :

- I. Gold lost, is something lost.
- II. Honour lost, is much lost.
- III. God lost, is everything lost.

But whoever possesses God inquires but little after gold and honour.

I. The higher a man rises, the smaller appear the things under him, till, at a certain height, he entirely loses sight of them, just as much as if they had no existence. And so it is when our souls—as they indeed can, and in every devout prayer really do—rise above the earth and stand before the throne of the Eternal in heaven. Earthly things then disappear : whether we have them or not is the same to us ; we know nothing about them, they are a cipher to us. At such times we can even say : “Gold lost, *nothing* lost,” But, my hearers, as we still live on this earth and have therefore need of the means of support, we set, and must set, at least a certain value on earthly good. The bird, as it flies on high, must descend to the earth and eat, or die ; and a thousand things remind men that until God calls them into the upper world, they have their life in this one. We cannot, therefore, but pity the poor man who has scarcely even Sunday free from work for bread, and, if free, scarcely an hour free from anxiety about food, and the unhappy feeling that he is a poor man. We are ready to pity also that man who exerts himself in a higher degree, whose noble heart beats for humanity, and who has gladly fed all the hungry, but has not now a piece of bread remaining from his own and his children’s wants, for the poor family in his neighbourhood. With sadness we consider the melancholy lot of that man, whose thoughtful mind enters into the weighty

concerns of our race, and easily flaps its wings and soars aloft to the sunny heights of truth, but who now feels anxiety about support, pressing like lead upon his pinions, holding him down to earth, or soon and painfully drawing him down when he has made his upward flight. Then, oh ! then we gladly confess that worldly goods are after all something.

Gold lost, *something* lost. Yes, but, after all, only *something*. Let that be said to those who, according to Job (xxxi., 24), put their confidence in gold, and say to lumps of gold : " Ye are my comfort." Verily, a bad comforter at all times. For while the wind blows and a storm may at any moment arise, while clouds spread along the heavens, and above a fire is being prepared in God's laboratory to rush and flash about our dwellings, they must constantly feel anxiety. Gold is a bad comforter, especially at our time. For according as enactments are made in the council of princes, will the rich have more or less ; according as the scale rises or sinks, the rich become poor and the poor rich ; but the rich cannot put into the scale even a grain. How long will it still be before the scales become balanced ? Gold is a poor comfort, especially at our time, once more, when so many eyes are set upon it as on a booty which they would like to seize by poison or by force ; when want makes those bad who at other times were good, those unfeeling and unjust who formerly proved themselves the friends of man. What a poet said of growing rich, we can still more justly say of becoming poor : " How many has it villains made, who once were brave and good." If you still have property, I cannot tell how you will secure it against thieves who steal at midnight, and from robbers who, with the appearance of right, take your goods to themselves. Gold and property are, after all indeed, only something. If all is lost, thou hast lost only *something*.

What then remains for me to say ? Oh ! I should like at once to fall in with my text, and say : " Lord, if I have only

Thee, I desire nothing besides." Yet let me name to you another thing, and introduce to you other thoughts. What is the use of more than enough? Is it not then for the loss of a superfluity that most complaints are raised? Is it not the rich who cry so violently, even although they possess more than ten or twenty other men together? We have brought, indeed, nothing into this world; and it is manifest we can carry nothing out of it; if we have, therefore, food and raiment, let us be content. Oh, let us be so! for contentment is the finest wealth. Fear nothing! If we have life, then shall we also have what is necessary for life. The earth every year bears anew; therefore, if thou hast lost worldly property, thou hast only for a time lost something.

II. Or is it only the disgrace of poverty about which they grieve who have lost gold? Certainly, in most cases, that is the grief. But, my hearers, do not many put too high a value on the rainbow adornment of worldly honour? Such persons as would rather have a fine dress on their body than gold in their pocket; such as gladly put up with bad board for themselves and their families, and would starve in order, only at times, to have an expensive table—and there are such—these would change our second sentence thus: "Honour lost, *all* lost." But no, for such people and for such honour will we in no wise change our sentence; and should they, according to Sirach, rather do the worst than lose their honour, and practise what is wrong to please foolish people, we will still say, *nothing* lost, rather than say *all* lost. But we must abide by what we have said: "Honour lost, *much* lost. For we must set the value of honour higher than we do that of gold. This must be lowered to its true value, while honour, on the contrary, must be raised to its true value. A great man of our day has found, and not unjustly, in *this* error of public opinion, the corruption of our times.

For men of honour are never allowed to remain undisturbed in their noble efforts, and unprovoked by the rich ; the good, therefore, cannot have the victory over the bad so long as there is still found among the people one who slanders an honest man for gold, or, among the poor, a venal slave who, for silver, betrays a good man. What is true honour ? It is the verdict, through word or deed, pronounced upon a man, that he never has stretched out his hand to a wrong action nor opened his mouth to a lie. It is the testimony in favour of a man, that, to the extent of his powers, he has at all times laboured for his country and the common good ; that his fellow-men have been first in his eyes and himself last. It is the confidence in a man, that gold may be given him without being counted, that letters may safely lie open before him, that he may be appointed to work which need not be superintended, that his word may be believed without his hand or seal being added to it, that every secret of friendship may be communicated to him, and that he will guard it as carefully as the friend himself, provided that friend forfeit not friendship by wrong deeds. True honour is the valid right to every place in civil offices, which such a man alone has fitness to occupy, and the reputation going before him which secures an entrance into every respectable society ; it is the good report of him when he goes away and when he goes out of the world ; a report in which his children and children's children rejoice, as in a great and glorious inheritance, even were he to leave nothing else behind him. Such honour is certainly worth *much*. Whoever vindicates and saves his reputation is pained but little on account of other misfortunes. As a king once wrote to his mother after a sad disaster : " Mother, all is lost but our honour."

Is that man however to be pitied who lives deprived of his honour ? Observe and distinguish whether honour has been taken from him, or he has given it up. In the latter case, he

has not indeed lost it, but despised it and thrown it away, and through public opinion there comes upon him what his conduct deserves : he is far gone. Turn back (some here may be on the wrong path), turn back, ere the last sound reach you but to no purpose, and try whether thou canst not, by better deeds, again make good with thy fellows what thou hast done wrong. Behold, having obtained forgiveness from God, thou wilt find forgiveness with men, and, in after years, thy former sins will be tolerably forgotten, and thy old guilt well nigh blotted out. Most stains can be washed out; although some,—for instance, actual unchastity—never. Time, however, bleaches away even this and all other sins, and if they do not disappear, they, nevertheless, no longer strike the eye. Never again to commit them is the best means. Use it then at present thou despised man, and use it perseveringly; so will persons not much longer point at thee with the finger! Rouse thyself up, thou youth of evil report, rouse thyself up from the bed of sloth, tear thyself free from the arms of sensuality, and let thyself no longer look towards places where all virtue is exposed to danger; so will persons observe thee more narrowly; thy father's heart will begin to rejoice that thou art no longer a mockery and a shame to him, and thy mother will cease to weep, as she now again believes that thou wilt yet become her support!

But what can I say to him whom mischievous tongues have charged with what is disgraceful, whom dishonourable men have defrauded of his honour? Honour lost, *much* lost. My friend, whether male or female, I can say little to thee, but only point thee to thy conscience. Canst thou not cover thyself with this as with a shield? Canst thou not behind it hide thyself as behind a wall of brass? Let this be thy wall of brass, to be conscious of nothing wrong, to grow pale on account of no guilt. I ask thee, hast thou then no friend on earth, who, like thyself, is convinced of thy innocence, who

does not doubt thy noble heart, but extends to thee his hand as cordially as had no one thrown a shadow upon thee? Hast thou such a friend, go in search of him when trouble seizes upon thee more strongly; take the journey, though it should be one of many miles, pour thy anxiety into his sympathizing bosom, weep with him thy tears, and let not the world see a single one of them, weep them into the bosom of friendship alone; that will clear thine eyes and make thy heart calm. Or hast thou no such friend? Not one? Have mischievous tongues estranged from thee even the last? Thou hast lost much, I could almost say everything. But no!

III. "Lord, whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Of that man who has lost God, can it alone be said, he has lost *everything*. My dear hearers, cling to God! you know not how long you will have anything else, and if He is not yours, you have nothing else indeed. Have you ever so much wealth, how can you rejoice over it if you have not the thought, "My gracious Heavenly Father has given me it"? How can you therein be calm if you have not the belief, "What God wills to preserve to me, men will be kept from depriving me of"? Be you ever so honoured by the world, how can you find pleasure therein if you cannot say at the same time, "My God, who knows me better, does not reject me either"? How can you be an hour secure against envy throwing you down from your high position, if you have not the comfort, "Without the will of God not even a sparrow can fall from the housetop"? Therefore, the man who has not God has nothing, even should he besides have everything; for everything is vain and of no value in respect of God, unless there is added to it faith and joy in Him. He who loses God is the poorest and most wretched of all men.

How is this brought about? Through sin and forgetful-

ness. It is thus that the prophet Isaiah has taught (lix., 2) : "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Enmity and rebellion against God is that sin in its nature, even when one of the least, and its immediate effects are distance and alienation. Everyone who has sinned experiences this. He was wont of an evening to pray ; on the evening of *that* day when he, with premeditation, sins, he will not like prayer, nor attend to it, because it is troublesome to him, because the way to God has, in his case, become long—between God and him an abyss has been formed which formerly did not exist. Don't be discouraged, but exert thyself, pray against thy inclination, however difficult it may be to thee ! To-morrow thou wilt be still further off ; to-morrow it will be still more difficult : an opportunity not embraced is lost. Also, God is more gracious than man, for He knows the honest penitent heart, of which a short-sighted mortal must be in doubt till he has seen proofs of improvement. Should the sinner, however, go away without praying, he proceeds even farther from God ; and the thought of God, which still follows him for some days, at a time fades at last out of his soul ; then forgetfulness of God enters, a fruit of sin ; every tie is broken, and the sinner, as we in another sense strikingly and strongly express ourselves, has no part in God. Just as we have called this forgetfulness a fruit of sin, we can also call it a root of sin. For it is the case with many, they sinned because they did not think of God. In this danger, I see suspended, alas ! the greatest part of the generation now living. Grown up in houses where there was neither prayer nor singing ; instructed in a school where, perhaps, everything else was excellently taught, but religion badly ; led into a world where nothing was less thought of than piety, the few utterances of which by the old were turned into ridicule ; not kept to Church, where there was still a possibility—despite a bad school training and example—that the spark of piety, which lies in all hearts,

might be kindled into a flame ; what else can result therefrom but forgetfulness of God ? And what kind of champions against sin can it furnish us with ? What heroes in the endurance of unavoidable calamity ? They have no God ; therefore, have they also no power, no comfort. No God ; therefore, also, no Jesus, no Holy Spirit, no Sacrament, no Church, no Bible, and nothing of that on which a godly man lives and dies.

God lost, *all* lost. Let us ask how this is generally brought about. What have you, and what is your possession of God ? Oh, we know Him, say they, as well as you do, with all His attributes, to be eternal, holy, omniscient, just, good, almighty and so forth ; we know that He made the world, that He preserves and rules it, and disposes of the destinies of every person ; we know that there is a life after death, when God rewards goodness and punishes evil. What do you know or possess more ? Answer : “ God is not an object of knowledge, and to *know* about Him is not to *have* Him ; otherwise a man could, through a single hour’s instruction, retain God as far as is necessary for the common purposes of life ; and the learned world beyond what is necessary.” But, with great truth, people say, the learned are fools, because so many of them are led astray through ideas and words which they have. Entertaining the notion that therewith they have truth, and that there is nothing superior to them—worshippers of pictures, for words are only pictures—idolaters who, if any veneration of the Supreme still dwells in them, worship their knowledge, their science, their self-made god ; hence their infrequent attendance at divine service, and their lukewarm, indirect prayer, with well-known self-contradiction, as is clearly seen. Certainly we possess God not as a matter which a man can expose to view or lay aside ; we have God not as a present friend, whom a man can call in and put forward, but (are we, however, at liberty to use comparisons ?) as an *absent* friend,

a remembrance of whom is faithfully preserved ; whose image attends us in every important business ; whose grace holds us back from doing what is wrong and urges us on to every noble work ; whose approbation (of which we are as certain as if He expressed it with words) helps us to overcome all difficulties, and comforts us when our intentions fail ; whose love (of which we have no doubt—even if for years no proof has been given of it) compels us, notwithstanding, to think of Him in every joyful and sad event, and complain to Him our sorrow as though He heard it. As such an absent friend we have God. Absent? That says too little, and we withdraw the objectionable term ; as a *present* friend we have God, to whom no way, no loud call brings us, but who is ever with and about us, without whom we at no time exist ; yea, so present as no friend can by any means be to us, nor one man be to another as God is to the pious soul. His possession of God is not science but piety ; not knowledge but feeling : it is *faith*, putting everything into the hands of God and letting our Heavenly Father dispose of them ; it is *love*, not allowing itself to be separated from Him, should even the whole world be thereby won ; it is *reverence*, deeming everything holy which God hath sanctified, and not suffering it to be ridiculed ; it is *thankfulness*, remembering the gracious Giver in every happy hour which He gives ; it is *obedience*, not hesitating to do even what is most difficult, nor to offer what is dearest ; it is *humility*, exalting itself only in God and choosing only to belong to Him ; it is *trust*, handing itself over to His guidance, even in the darkest night and on the strangest way, and thereby ever comforted ; it is *patience*, never becoming weary nor hesitating when it has to labour, even whole months, in vain, and there are ever so many nights of suffering ; it is *resignation and calmness*, causing it to take everything without complaint—yea, letting body and soul languish if only God remain as the comfort and portion of the heart. In such

feelings consists *the possession of God*, and the farther the godly man proceeds therein (a life-long progress) the more fully he has God; and the more fully he has God the happier he is in himself, and cares ever less and less for the things of heaven and earth; God is his *all*. So runs his boasting and his comfort. Go on saying that I am a bad man—God in heaven knows my innocence! Deny me your testimony—my record is on high! Meet me more and more with mistrust—the Holy One knows my heart! Shut me out where you will and can, and hold me up to scorn in every street—that does not shut me out of my room for prayer, nor blot out of my heart the consciousness that I am accepted by my God! Hold me down, nay, oppress me more deeply—if I let not *Him* go, I shall, even when most deeply oppressed, be *never wholly* crushed, and because I cling to Him shall be one day exalted all the higher. Lord, if I have only Thee, I ask not for any honours! So runs the comfort and spirit of the godly man. The blue sky gives me the comfort that He who feeds the birds will not let me perish! The ground which supports me is my encouragement, for God causes bread to grow out of it for me also! To God I commend my old age, He will not forsake me when I become grey-headed! To God I commend those belonging to me when I must part from them; He will be a Support to the widow and a Protector to my little orphan children! To God I commit the affairs of my house when the last piece of bread is cut and the last garment worn out! My God, Thou wilt then care for me. To Thee I commit my body: guard it from accident and severe sickness! To Thee I commit my soul: let not the light of its understanding be quenched by oppressive thoughts! Nevertheless, as Thou wilt, my God. Earthly affliction has but temporal and not eternal duration. Therefore, if I have only ~~THEE~~, I ask for nothing more in heaven and earth, and if body and soul pine away, yet art Thou the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

What I suffer, I know, and Thou also ; what I have yet to suffer
Thou alone knowest. My Father, is it to be also much a
for a long time, YET I abide always with Thee, for Th
holdest me by Thy right hand, Thou wilt lead me by T
counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.

“ YET ” is now my best loved friend,
Expressing all my trust ;
“ YET,” exclaim I till the end,
If I lie in dust,
If I fly
Far on high,
Amid the beams of fame :
“ YET ” is still my name !

If I've but the meanest garb,
And others gay attire,
Then I neither will nor can,
Like them the world desire ;
If their mind
Is inclined
Again my peace to try :
“ YET ” is still my cry !

“ YET ” shall now my soul be still,
And on my God repose ;
“ YET ” I'll calmly choose His will,
Who saves me from my foes ;
Since my Friend
Till the end,
Will give me what is best :
Now I've perfect rest !



IV.

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